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Diary of a Serial Killer



DIARY OF A SERIAL KILLER.

Other Titles by this Author

The Final Song

Rewind

Electric Goanna Dreams

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Website: www.wordsmorph.com

Patterson Wright

Literary Agents

To Whom It May Concern:

Our client approached us with this manuscript and urged us to read it. We did so and believe it to be genuine. It is an autobiographical account of twelve murders which took place in Sydney during 2007. The murders are a matter of public record.

Although our client submitted the manuscript and claims all royalties until such time as the original author comes forward, he had no involvement in the murders. The manuscript came to him in a computer of dubious origin, possibly stolen. It eventually wound up in our client's possession after passing through a number of hands. This was due to the password protection and encryption rendering the computer useless to most users.

However, our client has some skills in that area and managed to access the files in the computer. Realizing what he had discovered, he copied the information from the hard drive and handed the computer to the police, who have subsequently cleared our client of any involvement in the murders.

We are of the opinion that this manuscript, written by the perpetrator of the murders, should be made available to the general public even though the content is of a disturbing and graphic nature. However, the pictures that were submitted with the manuscript will not be released.

Yours faithfully,

William E. Wright

William E. Wright

Diary of a Serial Killer.

I love writing.

Not by way of a goose quill dipped in ink and scratched across parchment with a scattering of sand to blot it, nor even that of a gold-nibbed fountain pen and blotter. Maybe now and again in biro on a scrap of A4.

It is not the physical act of writing that excites me but that cerebral soaring into a world of imagination, poured out through swiftly moving fingers, capering over the keyboard. A real world for as long as I want it to be. Full of invented characters, roaming the landscape at my command; ready to leap into action or slide down a page into oblivion. It's my imaginary world and I love it.

That is why I became a serial killer.

Blink. Yes, I said Serial Killer (I capitalised for emphasis - a little writing trick).

Actually, my whole life, what there is of it, revolves around writing fiction. I left school when I was sixteen to work in the mail sorting room of a suburban Sydney Post Office. No, I won't say which one. It was okay I guess and the small income enabled me to move out of home, initially renting before I bought my own place as my income increased. I was glad to get away from that hell called home but more of that later. Somewhen around that time I became a mail delivery person. All you Politically Correct nannies take note. I didn't say mailman, although why I should let a bunch of PC dykes emasculate me is a mystery.

To hell with it.

Around that time I became a mailman.

What a great job.

I was provided with my own bike, a motorised step-through, which I could ride on the footpath between mailboxes. How good is that, licenced to ride on the footpath. After ten years I am still a mailman. I love the job, and the time it gives me to write.

This is really the introduction to the introduction of my story and you'll notice the font (the style of the letters) changes.

More of that later.

So how do I write?

Well, I start by sitting at my desk in the spare room. I call it 'the study' and have actually hung a few pictures on the wall, pre-framed posters of interesting sights, landscapes and such. I can sit back and drift into them when necessary, a form of meditation which helps me to blank out the travails of the day. A trip to the Sally Army scored me a bookcase real cheap and that is where I keep my favourite books.

On the desk, to one side, there are a couple of plastic figures about fifteen centimetres high, Japanese anime, fantasies with big breasts and actual pudenda, as sold to Asian children. They sit under a desk lamp observing the printer and of course, my laptop computer. I resisted placing the desk in front of a window. It would only be a distraction from writing.

Ten years ago it was a manual typewriter sitting in that spot; bought in the same second-hand shop I acquired the ornate desk and the old fashioned, leather covered swivel chair that sits in front of it. After my first book, the manual typewriter was replaced with an electric model, golf ball and limited word processor equipped, which I relished for many years until 'she' arrived, a sleek and slender, shiny, metallic-finished, wide screen laptop computer. She has her own life. Well, her own name anyway.

Tania Torqs.

Now I have a little office sitting on my desk, one which can play music to me while I write.

If I wish it to.

It also contains my pictures, both those I have taken and those which have been scanned in. There are also a few pictures downloaded from the net. Quite an eclectic collection all told.

All is run with the utmost diligence by Tania Torqs, who makes my electronic life so neat. I tell secrets to Tania. She keeps them because she loves me unequivocally.

Usually though, I write in silence, quietly pattering away on the keys, only disturbed occasionally by louder ambient noises from beyond my slightly unkempt hedges. The drone of the traffic is always there 24/7 but through and amongst it are woven a host of other sounds. Police or ambulance vehicles in the distance. Power tools. Loud motorbikes. Some evenings spent at writing are more irritating than others. I get irritated more easily these days. Maybe I need to get out of the city.

Anyhow, I sit at the desk and after booting up Tania, gaze off into the imaginary world I am currently thinking of. I don't plan my books; I just start writing about a story that interests me and rely on the characters to guide me through it. It is a more real and interesting way for me to write, being in the imaginary moment rather than following a pre ordained plan.

Unfortunately, that style of writing has many detractors, especially among those who market books.

No, I haven't forgotten about the Serial Killer thing.

Do I still have your interest?

Good.

That's what writing is all about.

I must tell you though; I have added some passages in after some of the events I am writing about unfolded. It does get a little bitter and twisted,

not to mention messy, from here on in. So don't say you haven't been warned.

In case you haven't noticed yet, there are two fonts (a font is the style of the letters).

Why you might ask?

Simple.

If I put too much personal stuff in, the Police will have no trouble finding me and that would be rather unpleasant. So for my own sake I have divided the actual story of the murders and associated events from the train of private thoughts that I share with Tania. She understands and password protects my privacy for me with up to the minute encryption. I couldn't take the sensationalism and shit storm that would be generated if I got caught, so the private stuff remains private.

Eh, Tania sweetie!

In the last ten years I have written nine books.

Why not ten?

I once had a girlfriend for a year, before she got bored with me writing at every opportunity rather than sitting beside her watching television, wearing that same glazed look, only stirring when the advertisements temporarily broke the spell.

The day she walked out, she burned an early, typed, paper manuscript I was working on at the time. One hundred and sixty pages up in flames.

The only copy.

Bugger.

That was the year I didn't produce a book.

(See how this works? If my old girlfriend read the above, she would know who I was, so Tania has to keep it secret for me).

The complete collection, all of my nine books, rest on a shelf to the right above my desk. Bound in leather. All the same look. A bit Reader's Digesty. One of my favourites, 'Something is Always Happening to Somebody', standing beside the darker, 'Long Teeth Bite Deep', catches my eye. Read many times. Those books are not just to look at. They are places to go.

Above and to the left of the desk, a huge pin-up board is screwed to the wall. On it, row after row of rejection notices descend in geometrical precision, gleaming rows of chrome-headed drawing pins highlighting the rather large collection which takes up most of the space on the board.

Rejections.

Starting with my first book, 'Into the Universe' and ending with my ninth book, 'Serenity Rules'.

I read some of the comments on those rejection slips yet again.

"Lacks characterisation." What? Haven't these people heard of stories? Show me a fairytale with the ogre's innermost thoughts revealed and his character so well developed that we, the reader, come to know every recess of that dark mind intimately. He (usually he) is described as big, ugly and mean with a penchant for eating people. That's all. Did Hans Christian Anderson get rejection slips because the poor reader didn't know the Princess had lesbian tendencies and fancied the girl dressed as a footman. No way. They are stories using archetypes but archetypes are not what are wanted by publishers anymore, as editors think most readers have a prurient interest in the secret workings of every character's mind.

"Poor plot development". What plot? It was a fictional day-in-the-life-of story that followed a barmaid from the moment she woke up until she crashed into bed late at night. It was based on an interview with a barmaid and covered some of the seamier sides of that occupation. (She gave blow jobs out the back of the pub for extra income.) Documentaries don't have complex plots.

"Not in a marketable genre". I can't churn out the other stuff, packed with literary cliché and artifice. Some of those books are crafted to the nth degree and read like it. There is a sterility to them. All I can do is tell a novel story which becomes a novel in its own right. I think my stories are quite good. Well some of them anyway.

I read a lot. Kinda like homework. It pisses me off no end to read some of the crap that's being published. It's all about marketing. Trouble is I'm not an established author, and/or pretty, and/or just flown in from one of the many hells on earth, clutching a manuscript about clitoral surgery. Instant citizenship stuff that one.

I am about ready to start a new book but I want this one, my tenth book, to be published.

It is my time.

To be fair to all parties, including the reading public, the book has to be good though. Descriptive, compelling. Filled with real characters.

Detailed. Not like some of the overblown crap that's being touted as literature these days.

True Fiction, its own oxymoron.

I have a plan.

First though. Let me say that, although the publishing world is terribly polite if it bothers to acknowledge a writer's existence, it can at times be utterly scathing while appearing almost banal. Some of those replies on the rejection slips are examples of excellent and economical use of the English language. I don't know why the people who write them are not

authors. (Maybe those who can, do, and those who can't work for publishing houses). Move over Oscar Wilde or Noelle Coward, an Editor has crafted a rejection slip. Cutting without an edge. Almost the Zen of contempt, but they don't get it. Not every story has to be a literary gem. Haven't they heard of Pulp Fiction? Hell, I'd take any form of publishing. The plan? Oh yes, the Plan.

Simple.

I'll start killing people at random, using all kinds of different methods, until I get to a round dozen. I could do one murder a month or so, after which I'll come straight home and write about it.

In detail.

Before my subject is cold and the blood has dried.

Why not write it like a diary? Dear Diary, I will need to murder twelve people in less than a year, without getting caught, and write twelve accounts. One for each month.

I could write it in the first person. Something I have never attempted before. The only real problem lies in the fact that I have never killed anything.

Ever.

The nearest I've been to death is a flushed goldfish and a very rare rump steak at an even rarer barbeque. I don't have many friends. In fact I have none at all apart from Tania but I don't need any. All my friends are in my books.

Tania knows a lot of them.

I'm not exactly made of serial killer clay but it's a really good hook for a book. Imagine the ethics of publishing if I don't get caught. An eyewitness account of twelve unsolved murders written by the killer. A Serial read over the morning cereal. Prurient interest and money, gasping to be made.

Guess I'll have to hire out some psycho DVD's and see what it's like to kill in the movie world. Tania will play them for me and even save pictures of 'good' bits.

Call it 'Research'.

I wonder if the movie hire is tax deductible?

Christmas and New Year are rapidly approaching and work is really busy. There is always a huge stack of mail to deliver and we get heaps of overtime but I arrive home after work too tired to think of writing. I will have to go over to my folk's house for Christmas, and New Year. God I hate the old bitch and all the dutiful son crap she expects from me. I'd love to put her on the list of victims too but I would be a suspect then and what I am about to attempt is hard enough as it is. If I manage to pull it off and they catch me, I will commit suicide. I won't end up like 'Backpacker' Ivan. Stuck in jail forever and he only copped for seven murders.

Chapter 2.

5th January. Friday.

Well Tania Torqs, I was right. Another messed up and dysfunctional Christmas. The old bitch got stuck into Dad again about anything she could dream up and he just sat in his recliner pretending to watch television. After those DVD's I watched, I kept waiting for him to snap and jump up and bury his fist in her mouth. He didn't though. If I had to live at home again, I would.

Don't get me wrong, this isn't really the book proper, more like constructive notes. I haven't really started writing the book yet. I have to write the introduction first. One that hasn't got so much information about me in it. I don't plan on getting caught. I will have to give this tenth book away when it is finished. There must be no money trail back to me.

I can always buy a copy.

'Diary of a Serial Killer'. Sounds good to me.

I watched plenty of mean son-of-a-bitch DVD's. Lots of crunching and wet meat sounds. I have made a decision about my first murder weapon. It needs to be quick, concealable and non traceable. That led me to go with about 25cms of galvanised, one-inch water pipe. Easy to conceal and I could add weight to the striking end.

7th January. Sunday.

I found the perfect piece of pipe in the garage beside my house.

I bought this house ages ago when houses weren't as dear as they are now and there, at the end of the driveway, really just two strips of concrete, was a wooden garage with hinged doors. These I never opened and just use its side door to get in and out.

The garage is full of the most amazingly useful detritus of humanity. The previous owner never cleared it out when he left, probably just breathed a sigh of relief as he drove away. For years it has provided whatever I need. It actually has a special place in my sixth book, 'Quantum Suburbia', as the end of a wormhole. You know, the end where everything that has becomes irretrievably lost elsewhere, materializes. I found a box of disposable plastic overshoes in there a few days ago. That registered on the weird meter. The piece of pipe was not far away from them.

I stood gazing at the zinc grey of the galvanizing for a moment, one hand still reaching into the plastic overshoe box, before it registered. One inch water pipe. Approximately 25cms of it. Excellent. I found Liquid Nails in a tube which worked and filled half the length of the pipe with the gooey adhesive. After it set, I cleaned the excess glue off then wire-brushed the bare metal of the pipe after filing the sharp edge off the ends. My garage

didn't fail me and I managed to locate some red hockey-stick bandage to use for the handle portion of my short club. It wouldn't do if the piece of pipe became slippery and flew out of my hand just as I needed it for the telling blow. As I wound the self adhesive bandage around the empty end, feeling the weight and heft in the business end provided by the now hard adhesive, I smiled. An apprentice manufacturing the tools of his trade. It looked pretty slick when I'd finished, shiny and red.
A deadly ten inches.

8th January Monday.

I just bought three water melons, from the supermarket. The local grocer might remember a man buying three at once but who in a supermarket cares about a customer? I have to try out the pipe to see how hard I need to swing it to kill someone. Hence the water melons. Skulls, vegetable or fruit? I think the bathroom may be the best place to try out my technique, the tiles are easily cleaned.

Later.

Do you know how hard you have to hit a water melon to smash it open? Bloody hard on the curvy ends. My resolve is hardening also and I think it was a good idea to get a feel for hefting the pipe. The water melons are now dead and photographed. It was all so controlled.

Master the Rage.

Turn the violence on, turn it off.

I have to carefully figure out my first victim though. Someone easy. Someone who wouldn't fight back after being hit. I wanted my first to be easy. Like losing my virginity to an older woman. Auntie Mary was very accommodating in that respect. More than once. She was my favourite babysitter. Apparently, at twelve, my penis was bigger than her dead husbands.

It was going to be a first for both my victim and me.

A time to die.

11th January. Thursday.

For the last three days at work, I have been trying to find a victim. My delivery round is about six suburbs away from where I live. No one will tie me to the area. All I have to do is pick someone weak and defenceless.

It came to me on the third day. Old Mrs Franciscus. She lives on her own in that big, old wooden house with the uneven, splintering plank verandahs and the smallish windows with the peeling frames. Her curtains look age-yellowed from the road but on the few occasions I have been to the front door, I know they are a pale wheaten colour. She is old and doddery. No one would miss her. The only thing she signs for are Book Club books. The rest of her mail is only bills. She's all alone in this world.

I could try this, no, do this, while I am on the job and no one would notice me. I am out there every week day. A part of the scenery. Postman Pat. Okay. I am all set with this but first I have to write the introduction for the diary. Sort of set the scene as it were. A new serial killing for each month of the year, in Dear Diary format. A real introduction but not a mean one. Note to self; be nice.

Introduction to the Diary.

It has been brought to my attention over the years that writing ability is only a small part of selling books. Fame and celebrity sell books as does a worthy cause or a prurient interest story. 'Confessions of a Muslim Hooker' or 'My Life with a Brad Pitt Look-alike in Bosnia' are prime examples of reasons to publish. Never mind the quality, feel the width. Some of these liars have gone on to make a living out of admitting to being a liar. Lying is the new truth. Whatever that means.

It is the intention of this Diary to seriously attempt to illustrate the inner workings of the mind of a serial killer and document the mental processes that occur throughout the practice of victim selection and murder. As I don't know any serial killers I have decided to occupy that niche myself for the purpose of Research. This cuts out the lies, boasting and bragging that litter other books on the subject.

This book will be a first hand account.

It is nominally a work of non-fiction but although the deceased aren't named, you will possibly know who they are; the murders in this diary will be Researched most thoroughly.

It is not the intention of the author to be sensationalist in any way, merely to document a troubled mind and the anguish it undergoes in completing its compunction. We who are more normal, should pity the poor unfortunate beings who feel compelled to murder their fellow citizens. It must be most unpleasant to be so affected.

As most of the victims will be women, I find it fitting to donate profits from this Diary to women's refuges everywhere. If you are reading a published copy of my book, then somewhere a battered woman has refuge and a battered husband is walking home after being released from police questioning or detention. He is walking because she scored the car. Complaining battered husbands get locked up, even if their wives are unmarked and have battered their husbands. These set-upon men supposedly don't need a refuge and even if they had one, the police would haul them out for questioning anyway. It would be the ultimate waste of money to set up a refuge for battered men (that's an attempt at

sarcasm; look for such further attempts throughout the book.) although there are some who definitely need one to escape vicious wives/girlfriends who invariably end up with the house.

Eh, Heather!

'All you need is love'.

Bit silly saying that as most editors are female. I already have that sinking feeling but I can't let the reality of female editors intrude on my attempt at descriptive reality or we'll end up in a world full of romance novels. Sci-fi romance, political romance, romantic thrillers. Off beat overseas stories with a romantic back beat and the heroine winning through. Tortured women who eventually triumph against all odds. You get the drift, stories populated with hunky men who profess undying love or get their just deserts and the occasional scruffy, misunderstood, anti hero who roots like a rattlesnake. Men used to rule; now it is the turn of the others. I don't like it. 'Fucking bitch', under your breath is a weak comeback. Anything else will probably find you in court.

My apologies to any families that have been adversely affected by my Research but good Research is an art. Your limited pain is vastly offset by the huge amount of good which could potentially come from this Diary. Out there are misunderstood serial killers, taking people's lives without thought, sociopathic compulsives, psychopathic victims of an interior lack of morals. Maybe someone should start Serial Killers Anonymous.

"My name is John and I haven't killed for three years."

This diary could be a social service. The Author.

Yes, it is a short introduction but I think it's alright. I would though wouldn't I. It doesn't matter. Now I am free to actually start a string of twelve murders and write about each one right after I get home from committing it. The first is going to be the hardest.

Chapter 3.

The shiny pipe with the red hockey stick bandage sits beside Tania on my desk. I am sure Tania approves. I took a digital photo of my instrument of death and downloaded it into Tania Torqs. I wonder if the collected pixels have any phallic significance for her or even if she cares. Women can be like that. Uncaring. Tania isn't though and I will bring home pictures of all my victims so Tania can see them as well. Just for Research purposes you understand. (Does she feel them as the pixels slide through her innards? Adds a whole new dimension to 'digesting' information.)

I checked out the old lady's house pretty closely when I rode past it today. She had no mail but I stopped at her letterbox and pretended to sort through mail while I scoped the place out.

The old house which contains the life of Mrs Franciscus looks deserted. It always does though with its overgrown hedges and unmown grass, rank weeds crowding through the red brick path. The house is a peeling apology for the type built after the Second World War. Designed by some architect who took a quick holiday in Queensland, the style of houses he produced never had a usable space underneath but are still built high enough off the ground to require stairs to reach the verandah. From some angles, that old pile of wood and tin faintly echoed the style of the traditional 'Queenslander' but only had verandahs on two sides rather than all around. Apart from the curtains and nets hanging in the bay window of the parlour, the place seems uninhabited.

I digress.

I will start taking the pipe to work with me tomorrow.

25th January Thursday.

I've done it! Today. I have just arrived home and come straight to my computer to write it all down while it is fresh. What a buzz. I felt like vomiting when I actually hit her, but the power. Alive one instant and dead the next. I had better write.

January.

Today was the day.

I had my piece of pipe with me in my lunch box. It was jammed in with a jam sandwich to stop it rolling around and making too much noise. It sat there calling to me for most of the morning. I kept looking at it as I nervously ate my lunch, sitting under a tree in the park. Such a little thing really, to possess so much power.

Excitement was growing in me as I laboured through the early afternoon, following the footpaths of suburbia as my destination, the house of Mrs. Franciscus, drew closer.

My hands were sweating and some of the mail I delivered had little damp marks on it where a drop of my bodily fluids had exuded from me and fallen to the paper. It was a visceral illustration but the pictures would go unrecognised. Do you ever check your mail for sweat marks?

I was trembling constantly now that the old lady's house drew nigh, telling myself that it was a stupid idea to become a serial killer. In fact, I was reiterating to myself all the reasons not to kill at all but, driven by the geometrical precision of the rejection notices on my wall, both spatial and didactic, I firmed my resolve to begin the process.

How many lives must I take to become a serial killer?

When does the process become serial? Two? Three?

Before I felt ready and fully in control of the situation, I was standing at Mrs. Franciscus' front door, turning the old fashioned, rotating bell handle mounted in the middle of the door, to summon the old lady. The lump of pipe was resting in my right trouser pocket. Would I be happy to see her? Forget cool, calm and collected. Forget poised for action. Reality was a dry, dry mouth and a brain going at a thousand kilometres an hour. I was super aware of every detail and suddenly time slowed down.

The curtain covering the bay window to the side of the front door twitched as it dropped back into place. Mrs. Franciscus was being careful. You never knew these days. Anyone could be at your door. Her curtain was more reliable than closed circuit television and independent of power cuts. It was a tried and true technology but involved getting out of a chair.

Ready and a little heady, I looked around me but saw no one. Her front hedges were tall and overgrown, little white flowers dotting the exuberant mid summer growth.

I was only visible to anyone looking up the path from the gate where my motorbike was parked.

Relax bloke, you are meant to be here I told myself.

Good. The door swung open and there stood Mrs. Franciscus. She was a lot shorter than me and stooped, her hair sparse and thin above that much wrinkled face. I could see her pale and veiny scalp through the henna red before she looked up at me. Over her skin, a map of deep tributaries led down the aged vellum of her face to the black hole of her mouth, where a few jagged stumps of what were once teeth lay in wait to ambush and interfere with whatever sustenance she shoved in there.

White spittle gathered at its commissure. Her clothing was definitely Chez Vinnies and she wore her floppy dugs at waist level, as though to haul them any higher would overbalance her. Mothballs and urine. My senses were working overtime.

Mrs. Franciscus spotted the papers and the phoney package I offered with my left hand and her bright, bird-like rheumy eyes lit up as she gazed up at my face.

Excitement. Both of us. Rushing to fruition.

Hers? Another piece of published crap to titillate.

A romance maybe?

What else could animate this derelict and worn out advertisement for euthanasia? I smelled mothballs and urine again, only more strongly this time, both human and cat. There was also something rotten on her breath.

Maybe she was dying.

Fitting. I would be doing her and the world a favour. I started to relax a little. This whole exercise was totally justifiable as a public service.

"I wasn't expecting a package." The grating voice queringly quavered.

I slipped my right hand into my pocket and felt the red hockey handle bandage on my piece of pipe. Resolve strengthened. I believe my eyes glimmered with the magic of the moment. Pre-rage excitement.

Apprehension.

"Mrs. Franciscus it says here. You have to sign for it." Bite you old biddy, bite and get me off your porch. Someone might see me.

"Better come in then, you look hot. We can do the business in the kitchen. Would you like an orange juice?"

Ah. I nod.

She turns and hobbles off down the hallway, shuffling in her decrepit slippers, exposed heels deeply fissured. I enter, swinging the door gently to as I follow, right hand gripping the handle end of the piece of pipe harder and harder. My heart is hammering so loudly I am surprised she does not hear it. My mouth is dry. Now is the time.

Now or never.

It must happen this instant.

Rage on!

I pull the pipe out of my pocket and swing it rapidly at the side of her aged, big-eared head.

Forget the watermelons, forget the rational training. Forget every vestige of any thought previous to this moment. I feel sick for the briefest instant before the rage bites deep as the pipe swings in a shiny arc through the air, centimetre by slow motion centimetre, committing me to a course of Research. Rage against every part of the extended human organism that rejected me. Rage against society. Rage against the hard-faced women

and girls who look me up and down like I was a piece of shit before coddling up to some blank-faced dork with a fashionably overlarge pair of shorts and, oh yes, a flash car. Rage that this world was not of my making but I had to live in it.

Useful rage.

Crunch. I hit her way too hard. Old Mrs. Franciscus' head snapped to the left as she crumpled in a heap. Instantly legless. The blow was so hard that the depressed outline of the pipe could be seen in the right upper side of her head. Her right eyeball had popped out with the force of the impact and lay glistening, dangling over her nose on a white string. Almost in front of her left eye now. Wet, but with no time left for tears to be shed. Little bleeding. Heart would have stopped instantly, as would all of her vital functions. A puddle started to form beneath her. Must be her bladder emptying.

God what a stink.

I started to shake all over, the gorge rising as I just stood there looking down on the carcass before me. Devoid of life, it was just an empty husk. I had probably saved her a lot of suffering.

My knees felt so weak that I had to sit down. I moved past the body toward the kitchen, noting the ooze of dark blood from the crushed skull as I passed. I hadn't meant to hit her that hard but it was my first time.

Virgin murderer.

I sat at the kitchen table gazing at the blood smeared pipe in my hands. A magic wand. One second you are alive, next you are dead. Just wave the wand Fairy Godfather.

An old cat rubbed against my ankles before heading up the hallway.

What to do? Make it look like a robbery I guess. Common enough these days.

All those tough criminals robbing defenceless old ladies.

What a bunch of cowardly wankers. Still, it was a good cover for me. I pulled on my latex gloves and plastic overboots before washing my pipe, drying it with her tea towel and then searching her kitchen. She had quite a bit of money stashed away in a cookie jar on the kitchen bench. I found it easily.

Didn't really take much time at all, this little exercise in Research.

Now I had better go.

I grabbed a plastic shopping bag and put the phoney parcel and papers I had brought into it then set off up the hallway.

The damn cat was sitting, crouched down, licking the pooling dark blood off the polished wood of the hall floor. Waste not want not. Mrs Franciscus would keep that old cat alive until her body was discovered. I tucked the pipe into my pocket and withdrew my newly acquired, small, digital camera from the left breast pocket of my shirt. The cat would have to be in the picture. Bit of extra interest.

Click. Click.

As I exited the front door, I called back over my shoulder.

"Thank you for the tea Mrs Franciscus. See you later."

Never knew who could be watching.

I shut the door and left. The rest of the afternoon passed in a blur. I had broken my duck. It had not been as hard as I thought to actually kill someone. The next one would be easier. Now that I knew I could do it. I was a killer now.

Chapter 4.

30th January. Tuesday.

I've finally done it. Not bad eh. Well yes, bad but not weak, not spineless. I am now a killer but not Serial yet. Note the capital letter. Words run backwards and forwards through my head.

'Killer, killer. Thriller, thriller'. I amuse me. Not in a puerile way. How to describe the feeling of power that subsumes me now? Nobody else besides Tania knows, but I do. She has a couple of pictures of a body, complete with cat, to go with the picture of the pipe and has made up a folder for me to put them in.

Prosaically titled 'Book Research' but encryption protected.

It is time for a confession. I really hate women who think that equality means they have to go overboard trying to be like men.

Equal doesn't mean, 'the same as'.

Those hard faced bitches, eyes circled with black like demented racoons, are found anywhere and everywhere but they have no power over me anymore. I am no longer frightened of their potential wrath or their spraying venom. Nor those practiced withering looks and snide asides. The boot is on the other foot; I have killed and am potentially dangerous to them now.

I sit back and envisage a mindscape similar to the computer game 'Grand Theft Auto', where I range through suburban landscapes killing hard faced bitches with my pipe. Crunch, crunch, crunch. I could give my mum one and she'd definitely stop slapping the old man around. No wonder he spends so much time at the pub. Sitting there, nursing a couple of beers all night to return home to a sober slapping. Poor Bastard, he might want to borrow my pipe. Maybe if he'd used his own to more effect, Mum wouldn't slap him around so much. I am the only child of an emasculated Dad. Possibly his only root.

Ever.

Poor Bastard.

Now. The initial prurient interest bit has been dangled in front of you, the reader, and a major question in my Research has been answered.

Yes I can murder someone.

Hark! I hear the whirring of an Editor's brain cell.

'Characterisation. How do we know what drives the obnoxious little bastard?'

It would probably be a good idea at this juncture to give you, the reader, an insight into the events which shaped me into what I am today.

Perfectly normal and able to conduct Research for my new book in a rational fashion.

If nothing else, it should also satisfy any lurking Editors.

My arrival into the world was a planned event. At least my Mother planned it; most likely without consulting my Father. Probably didn't want to trouble him while he was enjoying himself with his mates. There was no shotgun involved but the Bride's posy was quite large enough to cover her swelling midriff and my Father had that stunned but proud look on his face of impending fatherhood.

Idiot.

As I mentioned, my making was probably the last root he had from my Mother. All she wanted was a pet that belonged to her. A self moving doll to play with. The more I grew, the less important my Father became to my Mother.

He took to staying out and coming home drunk but she had snib locks put on the doors and after dinner each evening, she would seal the house up and if he came home drunk, he wouldn't get in.

My Father had less and less to do with us as I grew up and most of my childhood memories contain only my Mother, picking, plucking and pestering me with attention. Hide and seek was fun, sometimes I could get ten minutes on my own before that tone came into her voice, the one that is slightly desperate but lets you know that if you are within hearing range and do not comply, you will be summarily dealt with.

I always obeyed. She could be scary sometimes. I didn't like her but couldn't get away.

She bashed Dad once when he came home drunk and climbed in the window. As he was straightening up on the way through, she hit him on the head with the big frypan. She held the handle with both hands and really whacked him. I've seen similar strokes from the William's sisters during intense competition at Wimbledon. While he was unconscious, she dragged him out of the house and left him there.

School was a wonder. I could spend time away from her!

She walked me to school in the morning. Holding my hand tightly and only releasing it at the school gate. In the afternoon she would return to stand guard at the gate until I came and surrendered my hand to her.

The older I became, the more embarrassing it was and I was glad when she stopped doing it. We had a car by then and she would drive me to and from school. It only stopped when I attended High School.

I was a skinny kid with girly blond hair. My Mum liked it a bit long and slightly curled but she didn't have to put up with the teasing that resulted from the hairstyle she chose for me.

Day after day after day.

Schoolchildren are very cruel. The result was that I spent a lot of time on my own. Even the other outcasts avoided me. I was the only kid in school no one would swap sandwiches with. Not because of who I was but

because they were so crap. My Mother made the worst sandwiches I have ever tasted and that was my lunchtime sustenance for eleven years. No wonder I grew up slim.

I guess I was a bit introverted during that period.

And shy.

And a bit depressed.

Aunt Mary saved me from a fate worse than death.

I was eight when I first saw her. Aunt Mary had been in Europe, married to some French guy but she had caught him cheating on her and left. She moved in with us for a while. Did I say she was quite attractive and smelt of flowers?

Dad changed. There was a spring in his step and I heard him make conversation, an art I never knew he possessed. Aunt Mary was kind to him. Too kind in retrospect and Mum and her fell out and Aunt Mary had to leave. Before she left, she came to me and pressing a shiny coin into my palm, planted a warm, moist kiss on my lips. A trembling butterfly kiss. From that instant on I was hers.

She visited sometimes and Dad was very careful not to seem to enjoy her company too much in case he had to pay later.

My Mother frightened me when I was young but I already said that.

She frightened a lot of people.

One day, when I was twelve, Father and Mother had to attend some function together and Aunt Mary was enlisted to baby-sit. I was mortified at having a babysitter at twelve years of age until I discovered it was Aunt Mary who was to do the honours.

After my parents had left, Aunt Mary walked around me sniffing the air.

Gently but firmly she told me I needed a bath and ran one for me.

What could I do but jump in.

Then she came in to wash me like she used to when I was younger only this time I got an erection. She blushed scarlet when she saw it and I was mortified and tried to hide it down between my legs. I needn't have bothered as she took me to bed and swore me to secrecy.

It was that first kiss years ago that started it.

After that, Aunt Mary would turn up to take me out some Sundays and spent the twenty minutes of the drive to her home filling me up on facts about the place we were supposed to be visiting that day. In such a manner I have virtually visited nearly every important monument and landmark around Sydney.

But she died when I was sixteen.

Cancer cut her life short.

That caring, loving, beautiful life. The only person in the world I could talk to. The only person who understood the travails of life with her sister.

My mother.

It was only later I discovered that Mother's side of the family tree contains manic-depressives, depressives and the odd schizoid. Nobody thought to let me know I may have genetic tendencies to depression, or worse. I guess the genetic side of the problem wasn't as well known in my youth. My grief over Aunt Mary was profound. She was my life. I didn't understand it at all and nobody could tell me why she had to die. I used to sit in my room, shaking, whirlwinds of thought rampaging through my head and so, so saddened.

One day it became too much and I cut myself on my thigh with my pocket-knife, a rough, sawn cut that bled a little. Instant relief, clarity, thoughts soaring higher until just Aunt Mary's face was in my mind and a peacefulness pervaded me.

That must be what religion is like for some people.

I left home around then to get away from my Mother. My job saved me by providing an income. I had my own place and privacy. I also had alcohol and access to sharp blades.

No one knew.

For two years I drank to oblivion and marked my flesh for release. I was lucky that one of the cuts became infected and I had to go to a doctor. I couldn't go to the family doctor so I picked a woman doctor at random and made an appointment. Yes, you could in those days. People didn't get sick so often and there wasn't a health crisis. I'm only talking about ten to twelve years ago.

The Doctor was softly spoken and actually seemed caring, (how lucky can you be I asked myself). Her eyes widened when I rolled my shirt sleeve up and she insisted on inspecting my arms and legs. This is how lucky I was. Mine was not the first case she had seen and she actually knew about teenage self mutilation. She gave me a script for Valium and an address of an organisation that would help.

They did.

It was writing that saved me from self destruction and I'm glad I went and got help.

That's how I know I'm well now.

My first and only girlfriend turned up while I was writing my third book. We met at the supermarket. I was looking for some mousetraps but the endless aisles and confusion of colours was disconcerting me. I stopped her and asked for directions. After that I saw her on the checkout and always queued in her line until one day I plucked up the courage to ask her out.

She freaked when she saw the scars but I reassured her I was okay. She found out how okay shortly there after, as thanks to Auntie Mary I was a well practiced lover. As I said, it was the writing that saved me but it was

the writing that caused her to leave. If I had stopped writing I would have been unwell again. I guess I am a compulsive writer now.

It is dangerous for me to write about a relationship like this and I may have to do some severe editing before the actual manuscript is sent to a publisher. Reading about serial killers has made me realise that overconfidence in not getting caught is how a lot of them get found out. I also have to avoid the trap of wanting to be caught, which seems to be a serial killer thing also. What I am doing is not wrong. I feel no guilt. I am Researching a book.

I haven't had a girlfriend for seven years now, although I've had a few quick lays. Often without getting undressed, which is only one step up the sexual ladder from masturbation. I have been on my own ever since.

There, does that give you a bit of character to work with. Now can you see why I am not too bothered with the Research I am now conducting? Question is? Can I be identified from the above?

To delete or not to delete?

That is always the question.

With a shiver I return to the real world. Five days have now passed and still no news. I killed the old girl on Thursday and checked the place out on Friday when I rode my rounds. No sign of any investigation or authority. Monday and Tuesday the same. She may lie there for weeks. Was there a cat flap? The old cat will need water soon. Blood is salty. I can't have it dying of thirst. That would be cruel. Tipping off the cops is the way to go but I can't just ring them up. Oh yeah, we don't know your number when you ring the tip line. Your identity remains secret. Who would fall for that?

Electronic communication left tracks, pathways and identity. I would have to write a letter. On the computer. Printed out on untouched paper, to be folded and placed into a printed envelope, also untouched. Prepaid, so there wasn't a stamp to lick or alternatively, use a stamp with adhesive on the back. Leave no clues. No DNA. Local police wouldn't do DNA testing of the whole place for some old lady cracked over the head in a robbery. Would they? Anyhow, I had been in there some time ago. I delivered mail there which needed signing for. What an alibi.

'Check out Mrs. Franciscus at 54 Byrone St., Glebe.

She is not well.

A friend.'

I popped the letter into a local mailbox as I rode my round on Wednesday. On Thursday afternoon as I rode past, there was activity. I didn't hang around to rubberneck in case one of the cops saw me. Mrs. Franciscus had been discovered a week after her murder. Couldn't be much smellier, even with the hot weather. I caught a faint whiff of rotten meat on the breeze as I passed and noticed that the cops outside had masks dangling around their necks.

I watched the news on the television that night, with far more attention than I normally paid to it. Mrs. Franciscus was mentioned but not by name. More like: "An older woman's body was discovered today after a tip off to police. It appears that she was murdered during a home invasion style robbery sometime during the previous week. Police are appealing for any potential witnesses to come forward and would like to talk to the person who tipped them off."

Anonymously, by phone? Of course they would. They were oxymoron users too.

The next day there was an article in the newspaper. Not a large one, just a few lines really. All it said was that an older woman's body had been discovered after a tip off and the police would like to talk to the person who tipped them off. It was believed robbery was the motive for the crime and police were investigating.

It was a bit of an anticlimax really and not much of an obituary for Mrs. Franciscus. I felt a bit sorry for her but I had achieved more fame for her in a few minutes than she'd probably had in her whole life.

What was her life? What had she been like when she was young?

Should I get to know my victims or just snuff their lives out?

I think just snuffing, until I reached the giddy plateau of being a Serial Killer. Then I could start learning victim histories. Before, during or after I killed them. I wasn't sure. Afterwards would be the easiest.

I dutifully scanned the newspaper article into Tania's innards for her interest and added it to the folder entitled, 'Book Research', placing the scans with the already downloaded pictures into a file which I named, 'In the Beginning', also password protected.

8th February. Thursday.

There was nothing further in the media on the demise of Mrs. Franciscus. I was disappointed. Reporting death was like publishing books. The same rules applied to newspapers as to other printed media but they had to respond more rapidly to the marketplace. Some little old lady was unimportant, which made her death unimportant. No fame, no popularity or celebrity status and only a tiny amount of prurient interest involved.

Doesn't sell papers, I wonder if her first name was Diana; her initial was D. Her transitory moment of insignificance is over now but I will need to kill another person soon and write it all down or this diary will take forever to complete. I think the pipe again. Make it look like another robbery. Who though?

Questions, questions, always questions. I wanted to kill one of those hard faced, foul mouthed bitches from work. One of the smart arsed younger ones maybe. The sneeringly disrespectful little tarts who think they know everything. Trouble

was, I needed one who lived alone. She would open the door to me because she knew me and I could just barge in swinging. Who could I choose?

11th February. Sunday.

This writing appears to be getting a bit disjointed but really, in this font, these words are just my working notes which I am recording for future reference. Tania's hiding them for me in her tricky insides under password protection. This whole journal will never be sent to any publisher. After copies of the finished diary, twelve months/murders plus the introduction, are submitted to various publisher's, I will download all of this information onto a keyring storage device and hide it, probably in my garage, before wiping all the relevant files from Tania Torqs' hard drive, properly. Tania will understand, even after the electronic amnesia eats a blank spot into her hard drive. It is a little adventure we are sharing.

My life has changed a little. I have a secret. I have killed another human being. This allows me to have an overview now. I can pity lesser humans in the herd. I have the power of a predator, although at the moment I feel more like a hyena, having just scavenged a near dead specimen from the edge of the herd. I need to kill again, soon, to cement my place in the taxonomy of predation. I favour jaguars over crocodiles but there is a lot to learn from crocodiles. I looked them up on the net and rented a DVD about them.

Crocodiles have a brain about the size of a golf ball and yet have been around in some form for two hundred million years. Silent, effective and deadly. They have pits along the sides of the lower jaw which pick up vibrations. This enables them to form a mental picture of their surroundings, and prey, in murky water. They plan their attacks and don't take on anything which is too big for them. If there is any doubt at all over personal safety, a crocodile will not attack. The trick is not being ruled by desire. Clinical as a crocodile.

Clinical.

Without feeling.

Rage on, rage off.

Click.

A crocodile.

These little indents and short paragraphs are cool. I should have used them years ago. Same words but visually, the ideas stand out as statements. Just like leaving spaces between some paragraphs. Why did I not notice this before?

14th February. Wednesday.

I have decided on my next victim. I did a bit of snooping at work and sat in the lunchroom once or twice, something I occasionally do. I heard Rosaline talking to

one of the other girls, bemoaning the fact that her flatmate had moved out and she was on her own for the moment, until she could get someone else to share her unit. In conversation she mentioned asking the new girl if she needed a place to live. I don't take much notice of new girls, they come and go. Sometimes I never meet them at all, being out of the building most of the time, delivering mail.

I hate Rosaline, although she doesn't know it. None of them at work know what I think or feel and I keep myself to myself and avoid making eye contact. They think I'm a wus. I have been there longer than most of the people who work there and the Supervisor knows I don't need supervising, so he doesn't.

I get left alone to do my job.

I often have lunch in a park along my route, sitting on a bench under some gum trees. Much more pleasant than sitting in the lunch room having to listen to the brain-dead fatuous chat of a gaggle of girls.

Mental farting.

Rosaline and I went out on a date once, many years ago, and she let me give her one but on the Monday following our date, she told some of her vacuous friends at work how I'd come all over her before I could get it in. All the girls laughed and one called me 'Shooter'. The name stuck.

Rosaline purposely forgot to mention the musical, 'Cats' I think, and the expensive meal that it cost me to get to the point of coming over her nether regions in my excitement. She also forgot to mention that I gave her a good shagging when I did eventually get into her, moments later. I hadn't bothered to get undressed nor undress her, apart from getting her tits out before I pulled her dress up for access. She wasn't very responsive and I went home soon after I had finished with her. Lousy lay.

I was somewhat humiliated at the time but didn't make a big thing out of it. That was when the bitches at work started treating me like shit, trying to get a rise out of me with their banter. I wouldn't give them the satisfaction of reacting and that pissed them off even more, so they tried harder. Hard faced bitches don't like being beat. Shooter eh.

So.

Rosaline.

Perfect.

Not only an opportunity for murder number two but also the sweet taste of revenge at last. Served cold in the heat of an instant.

Soon. Before she acquires another flat mate.

The day before pay day would be good; she was more liable to be home. I already have the address. It's a different flat from the one where my humiliation took place but I spotted a letter in her bag. It was but a moment to glance at the address and remember it.

I have already been over there a few evenings ago to check the flat out. It's in a small block of units and has its own staircase to the back verandah and kitchen door.

Tomorrow.

15th February. Late Thursday.

How cool.

It is late and I have just returned home. Rosaline is now dead. D-E-A-D. What a buzz. How satisfying. Better than the first killing although not so neatly executed. Executed neatly, not. Nearly bookends, the juxtaposition of those two statements. I took disposable booties and rubber gloves with me again this time. She had an instant to be suprised during the attack and in retrospect I would have liked to inflict some real pain on her to get back for what she did to me. It doesn't matter now though, she's dead. I suppose I had better write the chapter for 'Diary of a Serial Killer' while it is fresh in my mind so I can get those vivid details onto the page. The realism is what will sell this book. If it is rejected, I will resubmit it with photos. Maybe a glossy would pick that up. Comics for the jaded.

February.

It was just on dark when I climbed the stairs to the rear door of Rosaline's flat, a bottle of rum in my right hand. I had caught the train here, joining in with the last of the worker ants returning home from the city, spewing out from the suburban train stations like ants from a nest, less chance of being noticed than travelling on the bus. I wore a baseball cap with the brim pulled well down and didn't gaze around much; Big Brother was placing CCT cameras everywhere these days. I always wonder at the number of voyeurs employed to sit at the other end of the wires, in front of screens depicting humanity in action, somewhat like a giant Truman Show or does the filming only get recorded to apportion blame after the event. Forget prevention, too difficult. Too many screens to watch. The water pipe was a reassuringly comfortable weight in my pant's pocket and the butterflies were nowhere near as large as the first time, although my mouth was dry. The plastic overbooties and gloves were in my other pocket, ready to be pulled on so I could explore her flat without leaving clues. The whole thing was almost reptilian. I was turning into a crocodile person. First the strike then the engulfment. Sucking down details of a person's life after it was over. Mental nutrition.

Standing on the back verandah, I could see Rosaline moving around in the kitchen. I stood in the shadows watching. I had seen various personal bits of that body naked. It was soft and floppy but she wasn't. Another of the embittered, hard, female combatants in the war of life; one who could never understand that softness and caring were worth far more than a quick fuck, dished up as bait to hopefully trap a bloke.

The numbers of men and occasionally women, who had tasted that quick fuck with her and then escaped, mounted over the years. Or should I say the numbers who mounted before getting clean? away, increased over the years, along with her desperation. But still she needed the put down and the dark, hard lipstick to feel superior to lesser mortals.

Her kitchen was messy.

Unwashed dishes in the sink and on the draining board, clutter on the benchtops and the remains of a Kentucky Fried meal on the table in the kitchen. Rosaline was in the process of mixing herself a rum and coke. A drink I knew from history she could imbibe all night without becoming drunk and favoured above all others.

Taking her drink, she went out through the archway into the lounge room and, picking up the remote, turned the volume on the television up as she sat down.

All very domestic.

Cue serial killer.

I was amazingly relaxed. I had mentally rehearsed this murder many times. Beginning from when I had first checked out her apartment. All it would take was a knock on the door.

I knocked.

Looking through the kitchen window, I saw her rise and walk toward the door. I stood in the light shining through the kitchen window panes and smiled my best smile.

"What are you doing here Shooter," she said as she opened the door to me.

I held up the rum bottle, released from its brown paper bag, so she could see it. Her greedy smile told me enough.

"I brought a peace offering."

She eagerly took the bottle from my hand and stepped back.

"Come in then. Would you like a drink?"

As she turned, most likely to get a glass from one of the kitchen cupboards, I slipped in, closing the door behind me. Perfect. In one motion I withdrew the pipe from my pocket and switched on Rage. Instant fire as I swung.

Unfortunately, Rosaline picked that moment to turn.

Whether to speak to me or not I would never know. The sideways blow glanced off the top of her head but it was hard enough to buckle her knees and she went down on them dazed, the rum bottle hitting the floor beside her, unbroken. She looked up and her puzzled expression and the mouthed, "Why?" were but an instant of time as the next blow descended, to be followed by a crescendo of blows.

I am not proud of this killing. The orchestra got away from me and careened on playing in arpeggio.

'The Flight of the Serial Killer'.

By the time sanity reasserted itself, Rosaline's face was a mess. Those lips would never curl in a sneer again and she was most definitely dead. Messily and bloodily, dead. My gorge rose but chundering was out, too much DNA left lying around. I swallowed forcibly, fighting the acid back down to my stomach.

I looked down at my front where there were quite a few splatters of internal material, brain probably, as well as blood spots.

The thing that I had come to realise is, once the heart stops, bleeding only occurs by gravity. My second blow had killed Rosaline so the rest merely chewed up geographical physiogamy.

Withdrawing the plastic overshoes and gloves from my other pocket, I put them on and immediately went and closed the kitchen blind before washing my piece of pipe in the sink, picking up the rum bottle and wiping it down after which I took a quick look around the flat.

While the television was blaring away I found money in her bag and on her bedside table. It went into my pocket. I also found a plastic bag, three quarters full of grass, barely concealed, tucked down beside the cushion of the chair she had sat in. I say grass but I've heard it called pot or weed. There must be many more names for the stuff. It was something I'd never had the opportunity to try, so it went into my pocket also. I was a killer, restrictions on smoking drugs did not apply to me now.

The mess on the kitchen floor precluded hanging around too long. Not the time or place to explore a life, that was for later but I could record a death in full digital colour. I moved around until I could get Rosaline's battered face in the viewfinder. Click. Click. Click. Not sick, sick, sick. This was honest Research.

By the time I was ready to leave, I was hundreds of dollars and a bag full of pot richer. I wiped the blood and brains off my front with a wet cloth, or rather smeared it all around so it became part of the design, before putting the cloth in my pocket to throw away later.

Couldn't leave my DNA lying around.

After a final look around, I decided the bottle of rum bottle should come with me also. A plastic shopping bag was easy to find and convenient.

At the back door, I removed the overshoes and switched off the light before stepping out and closing the half glassed door behind me. I stripped off the gloves and put them in my pocket with the overshoes as I descended the stairs.

Away clear.

Murder number two.

Am I serial now?

Chapter 5.

19th February. Monday.

I just reread what I wrote about the murder. I will have to change the name 'Shooter' and the fact that Rosaline knew her attacker before I submit it to a Publisher. No point in making the cops' life easy.

Rosaline wasn't missed on Friday but she was on the weekend and someone went to her flat. The kitchen blind was down and the television was on, no response to knocking so the police were called. They broke in and found Rosaline's body.

Being as how she wasn't a little old lady past her use by date, the television news picked up on the story and gave it a bit of coverage. The news crew came to work to interview some of her friends. Luckily, being Monday, I didn't go back to work at lunchtime. I was told of the news crew afterwards, when I went back to knock off.

There, on the television news that evening, in glowing colour, hard-faced, bitch workmates sobbed and blubbed. Disposable tears for a disposed of workmate.

Bollywood.

Suck it up, bitches.

20th February. Tuesday.

The killing was put down to yet another home invasion, with similarities to the previous murder being noted and the word 'bashing' used on a number of occasions. The police came to work today and interviewed everyone, including me. One of the bitch set dobbed on me and the cops gave me a hard time.

"Did I hate Rosaline for that nickname? Was I mad at her? Where was I on Friday night?"

I pointed out that the date I had with Rosaline was over four years ago and I spent Friday night at home writing, same as I spent every other night. I don't think the cops really suspected me. More hope of a quick result really. I don't look like a murderer as I don't like making eye contact and I don't act like a murderer as I am generally shy with people I don't know. That's why the bitches at work pick on me.

Because they can.

I must admit that the police interview worried me a little. My spattered clothing had already joined thousands of dead burgers in a jumbo bin at the back of Maca's. It was time to change how I killed now, or who I killed. I still had ten more murders to commit and couldn't afford to be caught. The pipe would have to be retired before it became a trademark. I wasn't able to part with it though. That pipe had sentimental value and I may just have a need to use it again, so I hid it in the garage at the end of the wormhole.

I knew it was stupid to keep it and I should have thrown it away but it was like my memories of Aunt Mary, lurid and precious but I wasn't able to keep her as the big C took her out soon after we had graduated to oral sex when I was sixteen.

I still miss my Aunt Mary.

1st March. Thursday.

The weed is great. I had a bit of an idea what to do with it but the first time I tried it caused me to cough and gag repeatedly. I was not sure it had worked due to the coughing but colours changed a bit. I went to one of 'those' shops and after talking to the salesgirl, came home with a waterpipe. Much better, especially after taking the sales girl's advice to put some spirits in the bottom of the pipe. The rum from the Rosaline adventure came in handy and smoking the weed was a lot easier. After work I have a smoke then sit in front of my computer keyboard. I decided to start writing yet another book as a cover for my Research. Really, it's my next one anyway but if the cops turn up, I need to show them something as an alibi for my time. All I have to do is bring up my writing file before I go out for 'Research' and it gets a time and date recorded automatically.

"Yes Officer, I was here all night writing. See the time and date on the document?"

I'm also being careful to close the windows when I have a smoke and use air freshener, so the house doesn't smell of burnt grass. Never know if the police will make a follow up home visit. They know where I live. The incriminating clothing has gone. The garbage truck swallowed it along with the wasted burgers and now it is compacted land fill.

So here I sit, dreaming up ways to kill people.

Simple, effective ways.

Non messy.

The next death would have to occur soon to keep up with the schedule or the Diary will take forever to write. At a rate of one death every two weeks, it would still take six months to complete my Research.

I sat there, stoned; gazing at pictures saved from the nasty DVD's, courtesy of Tania and her LCD screen, pondering on the neatest, tidiest way to accomplish the task.

Clingfilm.

That shouldn't be too messy.

Might try that next.

So far, the police had suspicions but no suspects in the two murder cases.

3rd March. Saturday.

Okay, I have had some thoughts on the next killing. It can't be someone from work because that would be too easy and there would be a connection. So I have to pick someone I don't know. I suppose I could just walk up to somebody on the street and do them in but I think applying the Crocodile Principle is the way to go. Preserve self above all else and avoid capture. I may get a little hungry for death using the Crocodile Principle but I would live a long time.

So this is what I have planned.

Hire a car, alter the numberplate with a felt tip marker and cruise down to Pyremont. Pick up a tart, a scrubber, a roughie from the ranks near the bridge, then suffocate her and dump the body. Return the car the next morning after removing the ink from the number plates and have it thoroughly cleaned out and given a makeover by the hire car company. Ding dong, Avis calling.

Perfect.

It would have to be a Friday night, so I could return the car on Saturday morning; otherwise my absence from work may be noted. Also, it was liable to be busy on Friday night so I'd better go for my date really late. If I missed out, it wouldn't matter, there was always another day. I am really nervous though. Clingwrap is a lot more hands-on than whacking someone up the side of the head with an iron pipe. Can I kill like that? Do I actually want to be a Serial Killer? I guess so. No point in wasting those first two kills, I might as well continue on with my Research and writing.

After all, it is my turn to be published.

10th March. Saturday. Just.

I've just come back from the evening's pick up exercise. Things went reasonably well but there were a few unanticipated occurrences. I feel like Superman. My mind is on fire and my body thrums with energy. This method of killing is far more empowering than homicide using a steel pipe. It was exciting. Shame about the girl but you can't have serial killings without bodies. I can't wait to write it all down but I think I will have a smoke of whacky baccy first or I won't be able to remain seated for more than a minute at a time. My blood is burning. I feel it coursing through my veins. My teeth are throbbing. The world sings and it sounds like heavy metal. Fingernails on a blackboard. The hair on the back of my neck is as erect as my penis. I suck in Life with every breath and appreciate it more than I ever did.

March.

I don't often hire cars so I picked one with plenty of room and zoom. A six cylinder I think. Paid in cash. I altered the numberplate while parked in a suburban backstreet, well away from the cameras of the busier thoroughfares.

After I picked up the car, it was way too early for what I had planned so I drove over the bridge and up to Chatswood where I had a beer and then took in a movie before cruising around for a little while, enjoying the hire car. So much freedom involved in having a set of wheels. I took time to stop at a mini mart along the way and buy thick, plastic, catering film and

plastic bags. Also some gaffer tape. I kept my head bent and cap brim pulled well down in the store to avoid the cameras. One day, a serious crime fighter will realise that cameras mounted at head height will identify faces far better than cameras mounted high up on the walls.

By the time I was rolling towards Pyremont I had everything I needed, tucked under the driving seat.

Lookout bad girls, someone has to die.

It was late, near midnight, when I arrived but I drove around trying to check out the sex workers. (How's that? Sarcasm and PC combined). The one that I chose was quite small and slim. Orange skinned under the sodium street light. Dressed in a short, short skirt, knee length boots and a tight halter top, her hair was worn up and garish makeup clowned her face into a caricature. She looked part Asian. Hugh Grant would have been in his element here.

As I pulled into the curb she ducked her head to speak to me through the passenger window. I just love electric windows.

"\$50 come in my mouth, \$100 come anywhere."

"Get in."

She smiled; I must have looked clean to her, and jumped in. I took off, away from the area and looked for somewhere to park in the grimy backstreets. The petite, brunette tart pointed out an alley to me and I drove into it. It was blind and empty, apart from the ever-present garbage bins.

"Your mouth." I said as I held up a fifty. It vanished, though Lord knows where.

She smiled a private, sad smile and kneeling up on the seat, leant forward to undo my pants. I felt under the seat as she did so and grabbed a roll of thick cling film, the end already peeled off the roll and easy to grab. The young tart had just emptied my briefs and bent her head forward to use her mouth when I struck, wrapping clingfilm around her head, turn after turn of it. She panicked and started clawing frantically at her head, flailing around in desperation. She couldn't shift the layers of clingfilm though. Her struggles grew weaker as her frenzy to remove the clingfilm speedily used up her available oxygen and her chest rose more and more rapidly until it was barely fluttering. Then it stopped.

I was terrified and exulted at the same time. This was against all I had been taught but here I was dishing out death and there was no God striking me down, not even interfering.

The Lord did indeed work in mysterious ways, none of which seemed to help victims of crime. This was better than alcohol, grass or sex. Well, maybe not sex, although the rush was similar. That rush just seemed to be more powerful and last longer when killing.

No one told me a person dying of suffocation often voids their bowels prior to or around the time of death. It stank in that vehicle. Luckily the

mess remained contained in her undergarments, apart from a little urine on the floormat. Thank God for knicker elastic and empty bladders.

Maybe there is a God after all.

Checking the entrance to the alley was clear, I put on my rubber gloves and taking her body out of the car, laid her out at the far end of the blind alley, her handbag beside her. I had to search for her money which wasn't in the purse in her handbag. That only contained a few small bills. Her stash was in a little secret pocket stitched into her micro skirt. Who'd of thought?

I took all the money out of that secret pocket before smoothing her clothing out and tidying her up a bit. I had to work quickly, something I didn't like. Next, the clingfilm was unwrapped from around her head and placed in my pocket before I tried smoothing out her face a bit, removing some of the skin wrinkles caused by the clingfilm.

I really couldn't hang around for long to enjoy her more, as this place was a potential trap. Shame though, I would have liked to spend a bit more time with the body. It wasn't all messed up and bloody like the previous two. I prefer killing this way. It was amazing being with her as she died. Almost spiritual. The pure feeling of accompanying a victim into death. Just like a cinema usher with a torch, pointing the way.

Click. Click. Click.

In reality.

Time to go.

I backed the car out of the alley and took off. I don't think the wheels touched the ground.

I know I was floating.

Chapter 6.

11th March, Sunday night.

I took the car back on Saturday morning, after checking it out thoroughly in daylight and making sure I spilt a little beer on the floormat where the urine was.

There was virtually nothing in the news about that death. This morning I found a tiny segment at the end of a page eight column in one of the Sunday papers.

What news was more important than the death of a prostitute on the job?

'Big Brother contestant vomits after drinking competition.'

'Shirley L. seen leaving ex's apartment.'

'Prime Minister says life has never been better.'

Blah, blah, blah.

What about Work, Health and Safety? Don't they have a say in the death of a prostitute killed on the job?

Do they bother to investigate the Work, Health and Safety of prostitutes?

Are there Inspectors ensuring that Johns wear rubbers?

They sent their expert on, 'being shot out of a cannon', to check on the Human Cannonball's accident. So why not investigate the death of a working prostitute?

What constitutes risk?

Imagine the lengths that the Work, Health and Safety people went to, procuring the services of an expert on, 'being shot out of a cannon'.

Where do you find an expert who knows more about being shot out of a cannon than the person actually being shot out of the cannon?

Was that expert on staff or contracted? How much were they paid?

I am sure that Work, Health and Safety could hire an ex prostitute or two to help with drawing up recommendations regarding the dangers involved in hooking. We might finally learn the official line on the relative merits of swallowing versus spitting.

The few lines in the newspaper read, "Woman's body found in mysterious circumstances. Police won't reveal details."

It was no good. I wasn't getting enough recognition in the press. It was a good job I was recording the kills with my digital camera. I now consider myself a Serial Killer and should get the kudos I deserve. Although to be fair I have not set a pattern, no *modus operandi* for the police to link my efforts as a Serial Killer. In a way that isn't a bad thing. No one will know until the book comes out, if it ever does, so the cases will be cold when they try to link them together. By the time the cops find out, I will be Australia's Greatest Serial Killer. (I have to capitalise, because I will be the greatest, ever.)

I have to kill a young man next. Just to break the pattern. Get out of the habit of picking only women as victims.
Now, who's been a bad boy?

22nd March. Thursday.

It was work that gave me my next victim too. I don't mind using work for victim identification, as long as the information comes to me indirectly from overhearing someone else's conversation.

I can't act on something a person relates to me directly, as they might remember talking to me about the victim. Something like that I would have to pass on as being a little too obvious.

Anyhow, one of the girls who works the late shift, Shirley, she who bestowed the 'Shooter' nickname on me, an ex mate of Rosaline's, is having a bit of a problem with her boyfriend. They aren't getting along at all well but he still comes by to pick her up after work.

What a dork.

He's a victim already. Sucked in by Shirley, one of the hard-faced, racoon-eyed, bitch brigade. He's already dead but doesn't know it. He was dead when I accidentally overheard about him.

Wimp.

30th March. Friday.

I've been thinking on my next victim.

The Americans have an interesting expression. Pussy whipped. That expression must have come about long before all the lawyers and the feminists got together, as the meaning has changed. Pussy whipped now is being married for two years and losing everything to the bitch. Three short marriages and these women are set for life. For a lot of men, it would work out cheaper in the long run to buy it, pay for play. That is, unless you go at it constantly like mink.

Predating women only go at it like mink until they have a secure handhold on a pair of balls. Then they dry up and you get squeezed out of every cent.

Painful!

Anyone reading this would think that I hate women. I don't! I love women. Real women that is.

Soft, gentle, caring women. Like my Auntie Mary.

Women prepared to stand up for their mate and treat him as if he is the most important man in the world. To them, he is. That kind of woman is not common these days. In fact, nice has gone out the window, along with manners and altruism but the 'me' mob just keeps getting bigger and bigger, especially after the size ten wedding dress is put away. (Now that is an economical double meaning.)

Really, I am just taking the opportunity to mouth off at the competition. I think I am jealous more than anything. I know I'm not as cruel as those bitches.

I watch these female Predators at work all around me and they are given so much protection. Where did that come from? She plunges a knife into her husband and weeps to the court about all the times he used to beat her. Says who? The poor bastard's dead and can't defend himself and the sisters troupe up (circus act) and spin the webs of deceit with red, tear jerked eyes and the murderess gets off with a warning.

That's not fair.

I would have to pay dearly for my kills.

At least I predate honestly.

My victim is left in no doubt regarding the outcome, which is generally rapid and relatively painless. It is also a private affair between the two of us. No tricks.

I kill, they die.

Honest Predation.

A crocodile is never your friend before he kills you.

A crocodile doesn't curl up in your lap making gooey noises before it poisons/stabs/has you taken out by a contract killer.

Who is more honest?

4th April. Wednesday.

Three kills and I'm already talking tough, although I don't feel it. This experimental Research seems to be changing me more than I thought it would. I believed I could be clinically detached from the whole thing, look down from on high as I killed for statistics and reported the results on these pages but what is happening is more visceral than that.

I enjoy it. The Research that is.

After the trepidation and gut wrenching of the first kill, an icy elation slid through my veins like anti freeze. The knowledge I could kill. Power over life and death in these hands. Not only can I write about it, I can actually do it. In fact, I am looking forward to my next kill.

Where was I before this little side excursion. Oh yes. Shirley's boyfriend, my next victim. As they live together, I know where to find him. I know the address and the very minute he leaves there to come and pick her up. What if I ambush him as he gets into his car? That would be pretty cool.

Lying in wait for a victim.

Planned like a crocodile.

Soon.

It will have to be soon.

I am hungry.

April.

Oh bliss. Oh joy. Now I've killed my little boy.

This was the most planning I have done yet. For anything.

I watched them for days and found out his name from mail in the non-locked mailbox.

I arrived at their flat late afternoon and found Russel had been out that morning in the car. No doubt delivering Shirley to work like a good little boyfriend. He'd left the car open when he returned. How convenient. It was parked underneath the block of units, up the back of the carparking area. Couldn't miss it, with the chromed supercharger poking up through the purple bonnet and the silver flames painted along the sides. Huge mag wheels with rubber band tyres and darkened windows to hide the occupants and look the part. Shirley probably reckons he loves that car more than he loves her. Sensible if true but now irrelevant.

At seven thirty tonight, Russel will come downstairs and get into his car before driving to work to pick up Shirley. His whole existence was mapped out in front of him.

Not.

Excitement proportional to the planning was starting to mount in me.

Physical as well as mental. Little electric shocks when I touched things. I was being energised and it wasn't even late yet.

I came back to the parking area at 7.15pm, broke the overhead fluoro in the parking area and climbed into the back of Russel's car after donning my latex rubber gloves and starting off the roll of clingfilm. I squeezed down behind the driver's seat, making myself as small as possible in the dim light, hoping the black windows would conceal me from view.

There was nobody around to see me, just televisions blaring with 'Home and Away'.

It amused me, all those people watching canned drama while the real thing was just outside their door. I was almost blacking out from my cramped position when I heard footsteps approach the car, the crunch of glass underfoot and cursing at the light being out. I tensed, ready to spring into action in case I was spotted. My heart was a trip hammer on speed and my tongue was glued to the roof of my mouth. The waiting seemed eternal. What if? . . . The driver's door opened and the car rocked as someone climbed into the driver's side and fumbled a key at the lock.

It was time.

I uncoiled swiftly and wrapped the first layer of film around Russel's head, swiftly followed by a second and then a third. His hands came back over his head to try and grab me, waving around like blind tentacles, seeking. That stopped suddenly as he grabbed the steering wheel and surged forward, almost dragging me over the seat as I held firmly onto the thick

film. I didn't realize he would be so strong! This was now a contest and I was not going to be beaten. I felt the Power grip me, surging into my muscles like pounding waves up a beach. I was Invincible.

Hauling back on his head and the roll of clingfilm, I dragged him back into his seat. I could hear the odd muffled sounds or grunts he was trying to make as he kicked at the floor, trying to find leverage as his senses left him. My heightened sense of smell perceived urine. He kept thrashing around and managed to poke a hole in the clingfilm over his mouth, sucking air in, so I had to wrap a few extra turns of film around his seat headrest as well as his head. Good old commercial rolls of clingfilm, plenty of plastic on the roll. Once his head was secured, I could grab his arms to stop him poking another hole into his mouth. With him struggling mightily, it didn't take long after that before his chest started to heave up and down, eventually fluttering to stillness like a beheaded chook.

Just like the tart's chest.

The car stank of shit and piss.

I was flushed and sweating profusely. This was definitely a lot of fun but hard work. More contest this time. The Power was still there and my vision was sharp and bright, just like it was after smoking whacky baccy.

I had thought this task was going to be onerous and distasteful but that thought was one made rationally before I was here.

Now.

It's all a matter of perspective.

I find I am not troubled by the killing and actually find it more refreshing each time. Using my own strength to kill another male is very empowering.

At last I could really call myself a Serial Killer.

I unwound the clingfilm, laid him down, planted evidence and took the photos before I left.

Click. Click. Click. No flash though, just the car's interior light for a moment.

Four down, eight to go.

Chapter 7.

6th April. Friday.

Well, that got their attention. Shirley had to get a taxi home because her boyfriend didn't show. As the light was out in the carpark underneath the units, she didn't suspect anything immediately. Shirley wouldn't have seen anything anyway because I laid her boyfriend down across the front seats after unwrapping the clingfilm from around the headrest and his head. I played a little sneaky this time. Misdirection. Sacrificing a little grass and a plastic bag, I scattered the stuff on the passenger seat before dropping him across it. For the first time I also stayed to watch the aftermath. Standing hidden in the darkened garden shrubbery across the street. Merely for the Research you understand. Shirley went upstairs and I heard doors banging and a name being called out, most likely Russel's, although I couldn't make out what it was. There was silence for a while then she came out of the unit and clomped downstairs in her cheap plastic heeled shoes.

This was the moment I had been waiting for.

She went back toward the car and peered in the driver's window before hauling the door open.

"You drunken bastard. Why didn't you pick me up?"

I chuckled nervously, the suspense was killing me.

The scream was loud and long. Very satisfying. Pleasant shivers ran down my spine as it reverberated from the carpark under the units. Lights came on, so I took my tingling elsewhere.

Wonder if I should put this bit in to be published. No, I'd better not. It is not clinical enough and it shows relationship. Tania Torqs will have noticed that I fibbed a little while recounting the murder as I am not going to give myself away by making dumb mistakes. I have so much more to accomplish.

The newspapers picked up the story, as did the television news. Police were calling it a drug related murder. I guess they had to call it something in view of the lack of any evidence. I take my used clingfilm away with me.

My scrapbooks are coming along, both the physical one and Tania Torqs' digital one. My photographs of the dead bodies are quite good, although I had to run some of them through the photo program to lighten them up. Sometimes a flash is a dead giveaway. That was a pun.

Shirley took a couple of days off work. She was back today. That took the shine off her, having her kill stolen by a more determined predator.

A more honest predator.

At least I don't toy with my victims. Definitely not feline by nature.

I can leave this women stuff behind me now. It is beneath my notice. If the herd wants to be deceived, let them be. I am above all that.

I am crocodile.

When you really see me, you're dead.

20th April. Friday.

Yeah. It's been a while. I have been thinking carefully about the Research. I am not Japanese and these people I killed aren't whales.

Can't justify it. Not scientific.

Four murders in four months.

I am right on schedule.

It's lucky that I didn't get caught for one of them. Not an extremely well thought out exercise on the whole. Still, there's no school for serial killers, is there?

The police nosed around work for a day or so, talking to everyone. Didn't let much slip but the fact that two of the murders were associated with work led to a few questions. They were after someone who may have had a grudge against the girls and seem to think that the nickname Shooter qualifies me. I reckon it was Shirley who tipped them off last time. I told the cops she had a grudge against me but I didn't know why. Luckily, I am not under consideration by the cops as a perpetrator and not one of those painted clown faces at work would consider me dangerous. Camouflaged and hidden and that is how I will have to remain with just my nostrils and eyes above the water of society.

Concealed in the murk of social anonymity.

I need a vehicle. Being a killer is not easy when you have to rely on buses, trains or a taxi for a getaway. Especially during peak times of demand. Mine, not the herds. This need is also linked to victimology, the science of studying potential victims.

I never really considered the difficulty in finding appropriate victims. My first mad rush into killing was amateurish. A bit like a teenage boy discovering sex and trying to quantify it. Again and again. Hand, girl, sometimes even the family pet. Power from wielding life and death will do the same to you. Killing becomes the high. I was lucky to escape detection. I am an unsub.

Do Australian police use profiling routinely? They have to link the murders first. I am only unsub/merged when I kill. Crocodiles can't swallow under water.

I have to be hard to find and even harder to see. I need to be bland. I already wear the sheep's clothing.

People at work are looking at me strangely after the longer police questioning but I pretend not to see. I am not paranoid but they are treating me differently.

The new girl, who I have taken little notice of, is observing me. I feel her eyes.

Nobody seems to have told her to call me Shooter or why she should. In fact, the hard noses are having nothing to do with her, which I find a bit odd.

Under closer scrutiny, she seems a little plain, late twenties, a slim mousy blond with decent tits and not much makeup. She wears floaty, long sleeved feminine tops over her jeans and says please and thank you to everyone.

These things are important. She might even be a real woman.

Her name is Barbara, not Barb or Barbie but Barbara and she reads Mills and Boon Romances in her lunch break. Bit of a worry that, reading romances. I hope she is not religious, that would mean she is one of those. Hiding under the bedclothes with the light out so you can't see what you're riding and screaming 'Jesus' at the moment of orgasm before getting embarrassed about the whole

thing and going home immediately or packing you out of the door so the paperboy won't see you leave in the morning. I shiver at the thought. Little lambs of God.
Baa and Humbug.

Back to the vehicle. I need to plan my forays carefully now. Changing the method of killing to avoid linkage between corpses. I am thinking of moving up to a garrotte for the next two murders. I have found some guitar strings in my garage, behind the box of plastic overshoes. There was a broken broomstick close by and I found an old saw and wood rasp on the end of the workbench, sitting on top of the clutter. I have the new garrottes I made, two of them, sitting on my desk beside Tania. She has already swallowed the photo's I took of them and they are incorporated into the password protected 'Book Research' folder.

I find I am missing the excitement of killing, so the next best I could do for thrills was get up close and personal with Tania and venture to a porn site on the Web, capturing pictures of erotic bits of women's bodies. Bits that really punched the right buttons for me.

Oh. You want to know? Prurient interest eh?

Well, as I am the only person liable to read this besides Tania, I will tell a little. I don't like huge, phoney, pneumatic looking tits. I like nipples to stick out. Preferably on an aureole rising from a medium sized, elongated breast. The downstairs bits? A smooth, rounded, slightly muscular backside does it for the rear. And up front?

Brazilian. Bald. Badger bald. Preferably with the nether lips engorged and pouting. I'm not racially inclined but I don't like black ones much. Just personal preference.

Well. Tania and I trolled the digital world and managed to find just the right parts which we blew up and cropped. She helped me make up a folder, frivolously entitled Tania's Tease. It contains a lot more than tits and runs as a slide show with a delay of a minute per picture. Tania can make me hot now whenever I feel the need. And she does.

I want to kill a couple next. Two for the price of one. I will have to plan this as two separate murders, as I can't fight two people at once. Alternatively, I could drug them before I kill them. That would make everything a lot simpler. First though, I need to find my victims and I need a vehicle.

27th April. Friday.

What a week. I bought a car on Wednesday afternoon. Ex fleet something or other. Plain white, super bland and automatic. Quite low mileage and far cheaper than I expected to pay. The dealer gave me a couple of hundred dollars off because I paid cash for it and I registered it to my parent's address. I park it on the front lawn behind the overgrown hedge as I didn't want to meddle with the end of the wormhole and it

would take me weeks to clear out my garage. The car can't be seen from the road and I won't take it to work either. No point.
The less those bastards know about me the better.

That's not all.

The day before I bought the ute, (Sorry, it actually is a ute but I couldn't put that in my story as I could be tracked down. I had to work back through the document to edit ute to car. The why of it you will find quite a few pages on.) I was sitting in the lunch room eating my sandwiches because it was drizzling outside and the park was too wet, when Barbara came over and sat down opposite me.

She smelt pleasant, sort of flowery. Made me think of spring. She seems very nice and tried talking to me for a while. I was polite. No reason to be ignorant when someone makes an honest attempt at communication. I don't know whether she was dared to come over or actually wanted to get to know me. Unfortunately, I was right. She is religious. Barbara didn't go into any details at all. Wouldn't expect her to on a first meeting but you know the type.

Didn't put out when she was younger as she was saving it for Mr. Right. When he didn't show up at her door with a bunch of flowers over the next couple of years, she tried to put it out there but the boys knew about her and were otherwise occupied. Except for a few opportunistic slobs she never saw coming.

Want a real man to trust in?

Jesus saves.

At least her little hot box will never end up as worn looking as some that Tania and I spotted on the internet.

Yawn.

However.

Barbara gave me instant inspiration and as the light turned on and burned brightly within me, I conversed a little in return. I hardly listened while she rabbited on, as my idea germinated from its little seed and grew larger by the second until it flowered into adulthood. I would pick a religious couple with no children. All I had to do was keep an eye on some Church of Great Faith one Sunday and follow a couple home. I could do my preparation by calling on them Sunday evening with a Bible in hand. Start religious discussions and talk like a convert. By the time I left their house, I would know whether they were suitable or not.

This Sunday I am going scouting. All I need is a bible.

Bound to find one in the garage.

I excused myself and left for my afternoon round.

29th April. Sunday, late.

Well, the wait was worth it. I drove over to the North Shore on Sunday morning and checked out one of those churches. You know. Multi Denominational.

It was the Church of the Hanging Christ or something like that, with all the expensive cars parked up and down the street outside while their owners were inside fervently attempting to take mortgages out on tracts of

heaven for the afterlife. I watched the couples come out of church and eventually spotted a pair on their own. No one was talking to them although they hung around to be talked to. Must be new to the area. I watched as they jumped into their four wheel drive and followed them as they drove away. We did not have to far to go. They lived in the rear unit of a duplex.

I went to Taronga Park Zoo for the afternoon, needing affirmation of my status in society. Strictly for Research purposes you understand. I observed lions, tigers, leopards, Cape hunting dogs, hyena's, dingo's, alligators and my favourite, Crocodiles.

All the Predators. Captured and on display.

The Ivan Milat's of the animal kingdom, although they killed to eat while we mainly kill to satisfy other appetites.

Whoa, what I mean is, some of us kill for Research.

The Clarke's are a lovely couple. I took the worn old bible, found in my garage, and, book in hand, turned up at their place late afternoon. Funny where I found that old Bible though. It was in an old kitchen cupboard tucked toward the back of the garage. Beside it was a big wooden box containing a plastic bag marked 'Nitropril'. Full of little white spheres like fertilizer. I would have to find out what it was.

When Gary answered the door, I said I didn't want to trouble the pair of them but was taking the word of God to the neighbourhood. His face lit up and he called to his wife to come over. She was pretty. Both of them chatted to me in the doorway until I was invited in. Luckily, my feet were a bit muddy from my trip to the zoo so I managed to wind up sitting outside on the patio furniture, overlooking the handkerchief lawn. The less DNA in the house the better, as far as I was concerned.

I was right. They had only been in Sydney for a few months. Gary had been transferred in from Dubbo. Promoted to head office in the Big Smoke and Penny had picked up a job teaching in a primary school. They pulled out a bottle of wine, hungry for company, any company.

Even religious old me.

Don't laugh. I wore sensible clothes; all those that my Mother has bought me over the years were in that category and guaranteed to turn modern women away. They screamed Mummy's little boy or one saved by Jesus. A single, female churchgoer would be lusting after me if she saw me dressed like this. I toyed with the idea but I think I actually prefer Tania's Tease.

Less trouble than the reality.

Back to the conversation. I was a hit and pretended not to know many people in town. I was doing the Michael J. Fox personality style. Friendly, chatty, slightly shy and eager to please. They fell for it hook, line and sinker and I was invited to dinner on Thursday night. I promised to bring the wine.

Penny suggested red to go with the roast we would be having. We parted the best of friends.

Having scoped out my prey, I slid back under the water with scarcely a ripple and walked down the hill to where I had parked my car.

Well away from the house.

It wasn't too late, so I dropped in to see the olds. They were watching television and apart from looking at me to say hello, my father's eyes never strayed from the screen again while I was there. It was the safety from interaction that contained him. Mother and I went into the kitchen where she proceeded to make me a cup of tea.

"You've been drinking. I can smell it on your breath. Better be careful in your new car son. You don't want to be breathalysed. Would you rather have coffee?"

"Ma, it was one glass of wine, I won't be over the limit."

"Where have you been?"

"Nowhere Ma. I had half a bottle of wine left in the fridge and had a glass before I came over."

"What. You came over just to see me. What a good son you are but you had better keep an eye on that drinking alone or you will end up like your father. Most of his brain cells have gone down the toilet with the alcohol."

She bustled about making my drink. Mother loved me dearly, bless her soul. Her own little man, who she bound to herself in defiance of the cruder, larger version, known as husband. I became her protection against marital sex before she learned how to slap my Dad. Noises in the night wake little ones, therefore sex is out. You can't be trusted to do it silently. The fact that he took it and stayed showed just how insipid he was. I wondered if he has a girlfriend or just pays for it when he desires. Maybe he no longer desires.

I looked at my Mum. Pass.

Excusing myself before the tea arrived, I went to the bathroom and locked the door behind me. The built-in cabinet above the sink, with its mirrored door, contained all the things that bathroom cabinets normally contain. It also contained Mother's sleeping pills. Extra strong ones to knock her out so she could sleep through Dad's buzz-saw snoring. She had just renewed her prescription. I quickly and carefully opened the new packet and removed one of the strips of pills. Sixteen tablets per strip. One tablet was enough to put her to sleep.

I went back to the kitchen after flushing the toilet and washing my hands. Mother never worked out that I stopped pissing on my hands when I was about five or six. It was easier to wash them than explain.

"Have you washed your hands dear?"

"Yes Mum." What else could I say?

I finished my tea while she nattered on and on about nothing, starved of company and companionship through her own aggression. My father never answered her incessant chat and she seemed to be capable of talking forever with no prompting. I waited as usual until she drew breath and rose rapidly to my feet in the pause. I knew, once I was on my feet, I could make good my escape. I gave her the expected peck on the cheek and promised I would eat regularly as I backed out of the kitchen. Dad nodded as I passed through the lounge on my way out. He

looked more and more like a nodding dog on the rear parcel shelf of a moving vehicle as the years passed.

Poor Bastard. I felt sorry for him.

So here I am, sitting in front of Tania Torqs with a pocket full of potent sleeping pills and an invitation to dinner. I took the strip out of my pocket and gently pulled one of the gelatin capsules apart to reveal the powder within. I touched the tip of my tongue to the powder.

Hardly any taste.

Cool.

2nd May. Wednesday.

I went to a bottle shop I had never been to before and bought two different bottles of red wine. I made sure there was a high percentage of Merlot in them as Merlot smooths out a multitude of sins. I also made sure that the bottles had screw caps. Paid cash of course and came home with the bottles in my backpack.

Barbara has been talking to me again at work and she is not as weird or lost as I first presumed. She has this refreshing Zen sort of Christianity going, where everything is okay. She says she just chooses not to sin personally and asked if I was married. All in the same breath. My negative answer brought a tiny flicker of a smile to her attractive mouth. Maybe she has non adulterous designs on me.

Do I want to complicate my life?

Will Tania Torqs become jealous?

Barbara doesn't push her ethics on to others. As she explained it, if you don't like what people are doing, you probably won't like them. She smells great and I had to put the Tania's Tease slide show on when I got home last night. Barbara sat too close to me at lunchtime yesterday and I felt the heat rolling off her. She makes me curious. I reckon that when she goes off, it's full on.

Later.

I emptied the powder from each of the sixteen sleeping pill capsules into a pile and dissolved half of it in each bottle of wine before screwing the caps back on. The powder dissolved well in the dark red wine and left no sediment in the bottom of the bottles.

Sediment in the bottom. Gay wine bar joke.

All is ready for tomorrow night. I will go and choose some Mummy clothes now and hang them ready to change into when I get home from work tomorrow.

4th May, Friday morning, really early.

I can hardly type, my fingers are trembling so. I am scared and exulted at the same time. Last night's Research was the most arduous, fear inducing,

gory, enlightening, spiritual transcendence that I have ever experienced in my life.

No wonder serial killers kill and go on killing, year after year.

I will have to constantly remind myself that this is Research and that I have set a limit of a dozen murders.

To say that Gary and Penny introduced me to God would be the highest compliment I could give them. I have just killed and glorified three people, yes three, in the name of my Research. Now I have to get it all typed into Tania immediately.

She will be digitally pixilated by the recounting.

May

This will take a while to write and explain, as I did some weird stuff tonight and I don't know why. Well, I do know why but not WHY.

I came home from work around Four in the afternoon, the time when I normally get home, and lazed around for a while reading. I couldn't concentrate though as twinges were running through my testicles so I took a cold shower. Then I got dressed in the Mummy clothes, carried the wine out to the car and headed over to the North Shore.

I parked down the road from the Clarke's unit again, just on dark, and took my backpack with the bible and the two bottles of wine and walked up the hill to Gary and Penny's place. On the way I had to think of all the ways to limit my DNA in their environment. I had latex rubber gloves and plastic overshoes folded in the inner pocket of the jacket I carried but I would have to do a thorough clean up job before I left. The good thing was that I would have plenty of time. The garrottes, I had brought both of them in case one snapped, were in the side pocket of that same jacket. I knocked on the door and it was immediately flung open by Gary, who ushered me in. Imagine my shock when, besides Penny, I was introduced to Helen, another woman who they had also invited to dinner. Just to make up the foursome.

How cosy. How fucking considerate of those religious bastards.

Here was I, planning to murder Gary and Penny for Research purposes when they invite another person to the party. It didn't increase the difficulty by fifty percent; it increased the difficulty by one hundred percent. I had a good mind to turn around and walk out, but something whispered to me, legends from childhood. Three with one blow. Tinker? No, Tailor. Take a chance. You can do it.

Greedy guts.

I made a great flourish of opening the wine. I chose the smoothest first and luckily they all wanted a glass to sip while we chatted. Gary even complimenting me on my choice of wine for the night. Easy to fool wanabee wine snobs though, with crap wine in expensive bottles. An empty Grange Hermitage bottle was worth a lot in the suburban wine snob stakes.

Helen, the other woman they had invited to make up a foursome, was a chunky. I'm not against chunky women as long as the chunk doesn't wobble. Helen was the sort of chunky that regular blokes would pass over but not so chunky as to preclude a desperate religious type making a pass at her. She was an extrovert who lurved her wine, almost as much as she lurved Jesus. I reckon when she went off she would be yelling things like, "Christ. Oh God. Yes. Jesus!"

Apparently the meal was almost ready but we went and sat in the lounge room to have a drink or two before the meal. Sort of a 'get to know you' session. Helen sat beside me but I forestalled any close contact by constantly getting up to top up their glasses. Of course I didn't drink any of the red wine. I actually lied and said I didn't like it.

Penny tutted and got me a white wine, wobbling slightly as she returned from the fridge. I sipped it slowly while they guzzled their red. Perching carefully on the edge of my chair, trying not to leave bits of me around, I chatted with them about the life hereafter. Far closer for them than they realised.

Penny wobbled off again to serve the meal up, commenting on the strength of the wine I had brought and soon we were sitting down to eat. I opened the other bottle of red and refilled everyone's glasses again before raising mine in a toast to Jesus. The wine disappeared.

We were well on the way through the first course and none of them looked overtly sleepy, just a little glazed around the eyes with an occasional slurred word here and there. I was getting desperate. That is, until gannet-gutted Helen suddenly pitched forward, face first, into her meal and lay there, snoring through the mashed potatoes like she was trying to inhale them. She wished.

I couldn't help myself and sniggered, which drew a shocked look from Gary who leapt to his feet to lend assistance and promptly collapsed as his legs refused to work. He tried to rise, his eyes droopy and his head nodding but he couldn't and slumped back to the floor, nearly senseless. Penny, who hadn't drunk quite as much as the other two, swayed in her chair as Gary attempted speech.

"Wha ha ya dun tus?" Fell out of his mouth before his head collapsed back and snores began. Penny, who hadn't moved, looked really sad as her eyes drooped shut and she slumped sideways off her chair in slow motion, collapsing to join Gary on the floor.

I left them there and went to my jacket and withdrew the plastic overshoes and gloves which I put on immediately. Next, I apportioned my food out evenly onto the other three plates and took my plate, cutlery and my glass to the sink and washed them in detergent before wiping them dry and putting them back in the appropriate cupboards and kitchen drawers. The two wine bottles I had brought, having been emptied down the toilet, were also washed, dried, and then left by the door.

All three of my victims were fast asleep. I decided to start with chunky. I took the garrotte, G string I think, and passed it around Helen's neck before grasping the wooden handles and hauling back. It was too easy. There was no response from Helen as her face became redder and more congested, the bit I could see that wasn't covered in the mashed potatoes anyway.

Eventually she just stopped trying to breath. All very peaceful. I felt let down. This was much too easy. No head rush for me there, just satisfaction at a job well done.

I dragged Helen into the master bedroom and manoeuvred her onto one side of the queen bed after pulling the duvet down, being careful as to what I touched. Helen looked quite peaceful lying there.

I used some paper towel to wipe her face clean of mashed potato and gravy until she looked presentable.

June

(Author's note: Not really a separate recounting but the deal was one murder a month and I am a bit ahead of myself here so I will call this part June.)

I went back to the dining room and started to choke Gary. The wire of the garrotte snapped before he died and I had to use the backup. It was the much thicker A string. We had reached A chord. (Accord, yeah.)

I went and turned the television on. Not too loud but loud enough to cover the odd bump or thud before I returned to Gary's dead body. He was larger than Helen and harder to drag into the bedroom and also harder to get onto the bed. I had to resist using my leg under him for lift, mainly to reduce the transfer of material from my pants to his clothes but it made the job harder. I placed him beside Helen, in the middle of the bed, before returning to the dining room to finish off Penny.

I'd liked Penny and if I'd had a choice, I probably would have spared her. I had no choice and checked she was totally out of it before garrotting her to death also. Like the other two, she felt no pain. I chose to drag her to the bedroom as I had the other two, rather than carry her, so as to reduce the transfer of dust and fibres between us and before long she also lay on the bed, sandwiching Gary between her and Helen.

By this time I was sweating but not enough to distract me from checking out the heavy curtains, closed across the bedroom window.

I felt let down. There was some excitement but it was limited by the ease of their transition from life to death. There was little predatory thrill. I felt that void, that space which needed to be filled with excitement and satisfaction.

I was unfulfilled.

As Research goes, this was boring.

What if I turned it into a media circus? I would have to do a good clean up afterwards, as forensics would be all over this place like fleas on a dog. Action.

Make them nude.

I went to the kitchen and picked a really sharp knife out of the wooden knife block before returning to the master bedroom with it. I started on Helen and cut her clothes off by the simple expedient of slicing up the front of them and pulling them back from her body. I was curious. First I ran the knife up her leg under the right side of her pants, cutting open her lightweight suit which I then followed by cutting the left pants leg, until her pants were spread open. Her blouse followed. It was not a pretty sight but I was still getting a charge from being able to do it without interference. She wore one of those one piece slim suits underneath and I put the blade under it and cut as I went. It wasn't difficult as the elastic material was under pressure and sprang apart. Soon she flowed over more of the bed and it only took an instant to cut off the bra and panties. She was a dyed blond and with her clothes off, occupied a lot more of the bed. I wanted more. The thrill was building. Gary's clothing followed next. He was pretty well hung but the exposure of his body didn't give me the kick that Helen's had. I wondered what the media would make of the three of them, naked on the bed, with Gary in the middle.

Penny was the last to be made naked. She was quite a spunk, so I took my time, like undressing a pretty lover, bit by bit. She had no need of support garments and under her slinky dress she wore matching bra and panties on her tanned lithe body. Gary had been a lucky guy. Past tense of course. Her tits were about the right size, not too small or wastefully large and stood upward even when the bra was cut open, rather than flattening out on her chest with gravity. Imagine my surprise when I found that religious Penny had a Mohican down below. She was quite lovely naked. It still wasn't enough for me though. I felt too normal. I needed more.

More thrills.

More excitement.

More forbidden Research.

Stomach churning, skin crawling, testicle tingling realism.

That is how I came to open up Gary, from his groin to his chest. There was hardly any blood as I slid the knife point under the skin above his pubic hair and ran it up his body slowly, with the point of the knife just beneath the inside layer of tissue. As it slid up his body, clear fluid welled out as the flesh gaped and as the hole grew in length, intestines and fat pushed up. The knife blade grated as it cut the flesh, sharp enough but not razor blade sharp. I was getting a charge out of this, blood pounding through my body, singing in my ears. Forbidden fruit, the first time I had witnessed real insides.

I didn't cut into any internal organs but Gary's intestines eventually spilled out over the side of his abdomen, running in glistening, lubricated coils both sides of the incision. I helped them and eventually they stopped coming out but they moved entirely on their own, like sluggish worms going nowhere. Creepy.

I stood there fascinated, watching the intestines writhing slowly. I could see his liver and stomach but I didn't want to dig around for his kidneys. I pulled his stomach out of the way and punctured his diaphragm with the knife to have a look at the lungs. Year 10 anatomy was coming back to me. I must have nicked his heart or something with the sharp tip of the knife, because blood started to pool in his near empty abdomen.

An idea came to me the instant I saw the blood. Going back into the kitchen, I found what I had remembered. Standing up in a glass container on the sink, along with other kitchen utensils, was a pastry brush.

Ideal.

I took it and went back to the bedroom with a smile on my dial and a job to do.

July

(Same as before. Three kills equals three months.)

How does one explain the thinking process when the brain doing the thinking is also the one explaining? How could anyone else explain the thoughts of another's brain?

Suffice to say, I used the pastry brush to write upon the bedroom walls in Gary's blood. Until it ran out. I wrote with the left hand of darkness of course.

Upside down crosses.

Pentangles.

KKK insignia.

References to Islam.

Anything at all I could think of to get the pot boiling but I wanted more. More writing.

More cutting.

Definitely more blood.

I left opening Penny until last.

Helen's chunkiness was interesting to see in cross section as I ran the knife up her body in the same way I had run it up Gary's. Fat underlay the skin as well as forming layers between the abdominal muscles. Large amounts of fat surrounded the internal organs. The abdominal wall fell away from the cut, gravity assisted, as the knife headed north. The cut edges glistened and leached fatty globules into the fluid that escaped all over the place. Moving the thick fatty veil beneath the opening revealed intestines which ran, sprinting out of her body with the pressure. I must have nicked the bladder, as a uriniferous smell ran out with the intestines. Poor Helen, pissing the bed at her age. Any fluid left in her carcass was swimming with fat globules like old washing up water. I moved the stomach aside and cut a hole in her diaphragm. The heart lay exposed so I punctured it then used up her diluted blood to daub the bedroom walls. Covering them with even more predictions. Christians seemed to hold great store in predictions so I gave them some to work with.

'The Lord is Coming'.

'Jesus did not Save but He Will'.

'Armageddon is nigh'.

'He will throw the Money Lenders from the Temple. Again'.

That was a prediction some lunatic might get a charge from and take out a bank or two. I live in hope.

I ran out of blood again and by then, Helen's sausage like intestines had spilled in slippery coils from the sheets onto the floor beside the bed so I went around to Penny's side. She looked like she was sleeping, apart from the slightly congested face. She really was quite pretty and well put together. I decided not to cut her up and spoil her looks so she remained whole as I left the bedroom. I rinsed my gloves off and after wiping them, came back with the camera.

Click, click, click, click, click and click!

After I had finished taking the pictures, I piled Helen's guts back onto the bed, into her gut cavity and between her and Gary, before pulling the duvet up over the three of them. It looked quite sweet with the three little heads on the pillow, duvet tucked under their chins.

It took me ages and ages to clean the house. When I was finished, I took the bag from the vacuum cleaner as well as the flexible hose, less the two longer tubes which I rinsed out in the bath and put away. The flexible hose and dust bag were placed beside the two empty wine bottles, along with the rags I'd used for cleaning. I looked in the pantry and found a green shopping bag which just about held my collection of bits and pieces.

I had one last check around before turning off the television and luckily spotted my bible, lying on the coffee table. It was added to my

collection. I gathered up my Mummy's jacket, backpack and the green bag.

It was time to go.

I left.

Overshoes off before I stepped outside, gloves off after I had closed the door. They went into the green bag also. All was quiet as I walked down the hill towards my car and I saw no one.

North Shore on a Thursday night, living room windows flickering with the light of television sets. There would be something interesting to watch shortly

Bag and jacket went on the front seat and I took off but not too fast.

Once back across the Harbour Bridge I found a nearly full dumpster round the back of a suburban shopping centre. I couldn't see any CCTV cameras so I took a chance and threw in the green bag with its incriminating contents, my jacket, with the now empty pockets and my shirt. I was wearing a tee shirt underneath. Back at the car, I had a quick look around before taking my trousers off and putting on the jeans I had brought along and left available in the car. After transferring my wallet and change from the trousers I then threw them into the dumpster as well. In fact, the only thing I kept were the garrottes. One broken, one not. Proof that an 'A' string doesn't give you a break like a 'G' string does.

Chapter 8.

4th May. Friday night.

I am so glad to be home with no work until Monday. Getting through today was arduous. I was a bit jumpy. Well you'd expect that wouldn't you, lacking sleep and worrying about being apprehended. Luckily I am known as someone who keeps to himself so I wandered in, collected my mail for delivery and left immediately on my motorbike. Nothing unusual there. Same with my second run. In the back door, pick up the next batch of mail for delivery and out again. All day I was sweating and trembling, constantly looking over my shoulder for a police team. I nearly crashed the bike a number of times due to my inattentiveness.

Had someone seen me leaving the Clarke's home last night?

Had they told anyone of their dinner guest?

Had Helen talked to friends?

Lucky I gave the Clarkes a bogus name.

I had lunch under my favourite tree and went back to knock off right on time. I didn't even chat to Barbara. I hope she is not annoyed.

Not much sleep and three dead bodies left behind me. Two of them cut up some. Makes me a bit anxious. People might not understand. It's only Research for my book, 'Diary of a Serial Killer'. That's all.

Still, all things considered, it put me ahead on my body count. That means I can slack off for a little while and chill. Speaking of which, I'll return shortly.

Back again. Thank goodness I found that grass at Rosaline's place. I just had a smoke and relaxation is washing over me as I type. I should sleep well tonight.

I downloaded the pictures I took of Penny, Gary and Helen after I'd finished with them. Tania approves. Her screen's glowing with approbation. I must admit that I surprised myself by cutting and painting. There was no way I had even considered stuff like that before but I needed a thrill. Yes, I admit it. I am becoming involved in my Research.

My digital photo album of victims is starting to take shape. Seven now. Compared to the later murders, the first one now seems so simple in its execution (another unwitting pun) but it was the first. I still feel an echo of that rush which came with my first killing. Some women claim to love their first sexual partner for the whole of their lives. If the feeling is anything like the one I have when I look at the pictures of old Mrs. Franciscus lying on her hallway floor, I can understand why. I should really have chosen a beauty for my first, rather than an old used up baggage.

I wonder how many young men say that?

7th May. Monday.

The Clarkes weren't found until Sunday. Poor bastards. Television managed to get a story on the six o'clock news Sunday night. It was the lead story. My handiwork has made an impression at last. The media is in a feeding frenzy, circling around the Unit of Death, trying to obtain more

and better pictures of the writings on the walls. Those done in blood. That means all of them.

The story ran in today's paper. Headlines screaming rubbish like, 'Religion is Murder', 'Open Up to God' and 'Devilish Murders'. There is talk of cults already. All the better for me. No one is actually reporting a suspect or suspects in the three deaths, nor were they linked to any previous incidents. A mystery. We all love a good mystery. It is too early to tell if I left any clues there. I don't think I did but you never know.

Time will tell.

How can I be so philosophical you ask? Believe me, once you have killed someone you can't bring them back. It is not like returning the money after a robbery. I'm not stupid you know. Killing all those people for 'Research' will not be understood. People will think me a monster. They will want my blood. The more people I kill, the more I will be despised. How many Hutu's can a Tutsi murder with a machete? A lot more than I intend to kill. But we have a justice system; another oxymoron. It all depends on how rich you are.

There are plenty of emotive words used in the reporting of my murders in today's paper. The article, run under a few blurry pictures of the walls of the Clarke's bedroom, explores every avenue of sensationalism it can pursue. Once upon a time, reporting meant a reporter conveying the facts of the story without bias. Nowadays, emotions are utilised to boost sales.

Sensationalism.

A servant of Capitalism.

I am helping to sell newspapers.

I wonder if I own the film rights?

I have more right to them than anyone else.

I was there at the time and it is my handiwork.

Barbara came over to talk to me at lunchtime today. She's sweet and could never be the subject of my Research. I'm starting to enjoy her company. I think she knows what she is doing to me too. The other girls are giving us strange looks. They can't understand why Barbara would want to talk to a leper.

Well, I am, as far as the racoon eyed bitches are concerned.

I am beneath victim status to them as I appear to have nothing that makes it worth their while to try for. They cannot understand a human being interested in talking to another human being without an ulterior motive. Or should I say, an unapparent ulterior motive.

Barbara raised the topic of the 'Holy Murders' as they are being called and we chatted about them for a short while but she picked up on my distaste for the conversation and changed the subject. I am finding that Barbara is very perceptive and often changes tack in our little chats to take talk away from areas that I don't particularly enjoy or feel comfortable with. It is one of the reasons I like her, although I have only just woken up to her skills. She is non

confrontational, which suits me down to the ground as I have had enough of hard-assed bitches giving me a bad time. (Listening Mother? I hope your ears are burned off. I hate you.)

I have a sneaking suspicion that Barbara is not all she appears to be. The innocent Christian girl thing doesn't quite seem to fit her but she may just be one of the new breed of Christians which are springing up all over the place.

You know the ones I mean. Able to parse meaning down to minute bites. This seems to allow open behaviour unheard of in young Christians a few years back. Most behaved the same way then but hid that behaviour well, so Mummy and Daddy wouldn't think their child was wilfully sinning. I will resist mention of Catholics or priests at this stage.

On second thoughts; no I won't.

It is amazing.

Start with a book of rules, complete with a set of instructions on how to use those rules and interpret it as many ways as possible. Then maintain that your interpretation is the best one and wage war on anyone who doesn't agree. Legalised serial killing on a huge scale throughout the centuries with no arrests and no trials of the perpetrators and the newspaper has the audacity to refer to my Research as being committed by someone obviously insane.

I am not insane. I even invoked religion in the last killings. Can't they see, or is it the old dual standards again. I am not the Catholic Church so I am not allowed to kill thousands of people in the name of God. The Church calls genocide a 'Crusade'. Maybe I should write to the Pope and ask for a licence or a dispensation to kill anyone who is not Catholic.

A New Age Knights Templar.

"Are you a Catholic? No?"

Bang.

Sweet.

9th May. Wednesday.

The newspapers are in a feeding frenzy. Sales are over the top. More and clearer pictures of the bloody writing on the walls of the 'Unit of Death' are being published daily. I guess some policeman far enough up the food chain fell over a brown paper bag and decided that it would be better if the bloody writing became public.

All to get the suspect/s apprehended more quickly of course.

No mention of prurient interest and personal financial gain.

The police do not have a clue as to who is responsible for the gory deaths. They say they believe more than one person is implicated. I feel quite proud of the job I did, alone. I definitely managed to get good media coverage on this one.

I keep thinking about the feeling of the knife slicing open the skin and flesh beneath. Slightly grating on the big blade as I pushed it through the flesh. I

might have to buy a knife, a good one. In fact I am beginning to toy with the idea of using a knife or bladed weapon for my next kills. It would be pretty messy though and I might end up leaving clues. Need to think carefully about that.

One thing though, the method of killing both the Clarkes and Helen has been suppressed. No mention of garroting and no mention at all of the bodies being opened up. I think the police are boxing clever and keeping this information close to their chests. That way they have a method of sorting out the religious nuts who daily own up to the killings in an attempt to glorify their message.

I will have to follow the reporting carefully and keep notes on just how much information is released. Don't want to fall into any traps if I receive a visit from the boys in blue.

10th May. Thursday.

I think Barbara is coming on to me. I have begun to hope so. Nearly every time I use the lunch room now, she is there and comes to sit beside me. Her thigh is warm and fills her jeans to just the right degree. When she sits opposite me and I smell her perfume and the underlying scent of woman, it makes me achingly hard. She is not as plain as I first thought or am I becoming biased. I must admit that I have taken to using the lunch room a lot more in the last week or so as I like talking to her and she calls me by my name, Reece. It's music to my ears after all the years of being mocked with 'Shooter' at work. Although the use of that name has dwindled since Rosaline was 'Researched', it has not entirely died out.

I am thinking of asking Barbara out on a date soon.

I wonder if she'd ever come home with me. I'd have to tidy the place up a bit before I ask her. I'll start tidying up tomorrow.

Thinking about Barbara is not good for me.

Show us yer tits Tania Torqs; I'll scan the newspaper articles and pictures in later.

13th May. Sunday night.

Well, where do I start?

The three killings have sparked off a huge debate in the media and among the religious fraternity. Everyone is calling for calm in the face of revelations that Islamic and Ku Klux Klan slogans were found on the walls. Every religion seems to be indirectly blaming adherents of other religions for the slaughter and some extremist sects are trying to cause a furore.

The Church of the Hanging Christ is under investigation because some witless woman claimed that a preacher in the church tried to brainwash her. Claimed he mentioned sex. I saw her on one of those current affair shows.

Her fifteen minutes of fame.

Either the preacher was blind or really hard up. Or both.
 You know the type of woman. Hopeless. Socio-economically challenged.
 A bit overweight and calculating. More racoon eyes. Gushing tears as the camera zooms in for the tear jerking close up. Look at me. Poor, poor me.
 Someone is trying to take advantage.
 Who gives these women space?
 Who believes them?
 Just give them an Academy Award (don't forget the TM sign after that) and piss them off. Without the cash reward.
 It's like feeding cats; once you do it you can't get rid of them.
 Ever see a stunningly beautiful woman on these types of shows making those sorts of complaints?
 Ever see an educated woman on these types of shows making those sorts of complaints?
 No?
 Why?
 Because the complainers all come out of the same jelly mould.
 "Excuse me. What is your religion?"
 "Victim."

Besides the Church of the Hanging Christ copping a broadside, pressure is on the police to quickly bring the perpetrators to justice. There were even questions in State Parliament to the Police Minister. He waffled his way through.

It was reported in The Weekend Australian that police were having difficulty in identifying any particular group responsible for the killings, as the slogans on the walls of the Unit of Death covered just about every religious faction except the Hare Krishna's and no one group is claiming responsibility.

The *modus operandi* was unlike anything on record and the police are still waiting for further forensic results. No one in the area saw anything unusual and fresh leads are in short supply.

I am scared shitless. Not only that but I'm expecting the police to be knocking down my door any minute. I am a little stressed too. In fact, I pinched some of Mum's valium. One every now and again helps, as does smoking grass when I'm at home, but I don't have much of that left. Besides being scared shitless, I am proud that my Research is being noticed at last. I am finally getting the advance publicity for my Diary of a Serial Killer that the publishers rely on for making sales. The retention of information as to the method of killing will help verify the authenticity of my writing.

This sucker will be published.

I can feel it in my bones. Question is though, do I kill again in the same way to perpetuate the myth or do I swap methodology again. I think I will use the garrotte one more time and try to make a religious connection with the murder to

muddy the waters before I change tack once again. I won't use sedation beforehand for the next victim. That will definitely make the deed more exciting.

I went to the website of Friday's current affair program. There was the 'victim' of the priest from The Church of the Hanging Christ. At home. As a lead up to the shot of her in her lounge, the camera pans onto the front of the house from up the street with a voice over, you know the sort of journalism.

"A Western Suburb's woman claims a local priest, from The Church of the Hanging Christ, knocked on her door to ask for donations and tried to hypnotise her into having sex with him."

I noticed something more however. Something that is never supposed to appear on these shows. I went back over Tania Torq's record of this segment of the programme until I found the best frame to check and blew it up. What I was looking at was blurred and just starting to pixilate but I cropped the frame and utilised my Ulead Paint program. It allowed me to increase the density of pixilation and sharpen up the picture in its magnified mode.

There it was, just. A street name. Snuck past whoever was supposed to check the footage so the 'victim' could not be identified. The house number was easy.

17 Borderline Drive, out in the Western suburbs.

Maybe I won't wait. It would be best to do this soon, while the case is active. Muddy the waters and create confusion by causing more religious fervour.

Make it my last garrotting before I change the M.O. of my Research.

17th May. Thursday night.

Barbara and I seem to be spending lunchtimes together more often. I still like to sit under the gum trees in the park for lunch now and again but whenever I am at the mail centre, I like to eat lunch with her. The hard faces have lost interest in us. We are beneath the radar. Barbara is the first woman I have been able to look directly at, other than my Aunt Mary, for more than a moment.

She helped me to do it.

"Reece. Do you find me unattractive?" she said to me on Monday.

I have previously described her as plain but when I had a quick peek at her face, which in retrospect she wanted me to do; I saw a faint trace of makeup and her eyes. I had never looked at her up close before and her brilliant emerald green eyes took me by surprise. She looked totally different with those eyes in play.

"No, I think you are really quite pretty." I replied, looking anywhere but at her.

"Then why don't you look at my face? Have I got a booger hanging out of my nose or something?"

I flicked my eyes up to check for a booger. I just couldn't help it.

Barbara winked one of those green beacons at me when our eyes made contact.

She had a slight smile on her face.

"Gotcha. That wasn't too hard was it?"

I looked down and giggled. Giggled like a schoolkid, before looking up at her face again. The green eyes had smile lines around them and softened immediately as she looked at my face. Before I broke the gaze again.

"You have the softest, most gentle eyes I have ever seen on a man," she whispered so only I would hear. I looked up again into those remarkable eyes.

"That's better," she breathed as she captured my gaze again for a moment.

It was then I became enthralled.

Today I looked at her face for at least thirty seconds while we were talking. I'm sure her eyes twinkled. I think I am in love. Especially with someone who thinks I have soft, gentle eyes.

20th May. Sunday night.

I resisted asking Barbara out but I am going to do so this week. Maybe we could go to the beach next weekend so we can spend some time together. Although the nights are getting cooler, the days are still pleasant enough. I have an ulterior motive for choosing the beach; I really want to see what her body looks like without the encumbrance of clothing.

I know it's selfish.

That's for later though.

The media frenzy over the triple killings has died down. It is obviously not considered newsworthy or topical enough to sell anymore papers. Time to stir the pot a little more and see what comes of it. Monday night. When everyone is tucked up in their homes after a hard weekend. That will be a good time to strike.

I have a plan. Tania made me up a phoney identification. Business card size. It looks really official and identifies me as an undercover journalist with a major newspaper. I printed it out onto some white card and laminated it. I also have a story to go with the card which will get me into the house. What do victims want? Justice?

Don't be silly.

Justice today is money.

Lots of money.

21st May. Monday night, late.

Done and dusted and what a high. I felt like I was flying on the drive home and had to be careful to drive within the speed limits so I wouldn't get pulled over by the police. I am sure that there is no God, or, if there is one, that he/she/it is toothless and sucking pap through a straw.

Nil retribution for killing. No bolt of lightening, no turning into a frog, no nothing.

Nil.

Nada.

Zip.

Here I am at home again; ready to write up my next escapade in the Research for a book which will get published.

I just know it.

August

I am trying not to be blasé about all of this but I am getting better and more efficient at killing with each new murder. The fear that used to haunt my every illegal move is reducing as I become more practiced in my Research. Also, I am becoming more aware as my instincts are honed. I can spot escape routes easily and feel when anything or anybody threatens me by a tingling in my scalp. I guess I will have to guard against overconfidence though.

I am becoming subsumed by the crocodile.

Sly and stealthy until the moment of attack, then the frenzy.

I drove out to the Western suburbs and cruised down Borderline Drive just on dark, marking number seventeen to return to. It was in a medium priced housing subdivision area, so I drove around the block and parked on a more travelled road away from any street lights. I sat for a minute and looked around carefully to see if I was under observation but it was Monday night. Who goes out on Monday night? It was after dark and the joggers were all at home by now.

The night was my friend and it was dinner time.

Having checked for garrotte, rubber gloves and plastic boots, I got out of the car and headed around the block. I had already changed the number on the numberplate with a black felt tip, so it didn't matter if someone took the registration number of my car down. I didn't intend being long anyhow.

17 Borderline Drive was a fairly new house on a tiny block of land. Not cheap. Nothing much was these days. It was a pretty bland house, in amongst others of its ilk, in a pretty bland street. Welcome to suburbia. I knocked on the panel door, same as every other door on every other house nearby, differentiated only by the different mouldings stuck on it. I waited for a moment and knocked again. The door opened as far as the safety chain allowed and half a face and a right eye occupied the gap. It was the 'victim' from the current affairs show. In the flesh.

"Yes. What do you want?" Suspiciously.

I pulled out my wallet and withdrew the pre-prepared card.

"William Wallace. Associated Newspapers. I have been asked by my Editor to come and talk to you about your story."

"I'm not talking to any journalists. Go away." She started to close the door on me.

"Fifty thousand dollars Maam. That is what we are offering for your story."

The door stopped swinging too and the right eye appeared again.

'Did you say fifty thousand dollars? Just for talking to you?'

"Yes Maam. That's what my Editor said."

The door was pushed too and the chain was removed before being swung wide to admit me. I entered and was shown to the lounge where I thankfully discovered we were the only people in the house.

Handy.

"Would you like a cup of coffee Mr. Wallace?" the victim asked.

I nodded, "That would be lovely thank you."

She turned and walked toward the kitchen, presenting her back and that was when I struck. No mucking about. No small talk. No social niceties.

I already had the garrotte in my hand and spread it out as I followed her, my rubber soled shoes making no sound on the carpeted floor. One handle in each hand, arms crossed at the wrists, I came up behind her and whipped the loop of the 'A' guitar string over her head, pulling it tight as it cleared her chin. She went ape shit, arms windmilling, body heaving and jerking but I pulled the wire tighter and in our struggles she fell over, dragging me down with her.

All the better.

I followed her down as she tried to turn toward me and landed on top of her. I had to put my knee into the small of her back and haul hard on the handles to quell her struggles. I suddenly smelled shit. Great. The bitch had shat herself. There were definitely advantages to sedation. Before long her struggles ceased and she lay quiescent beneath me, face down on the floor.

Out came the latex gloves and overshoes.

When I rolled her over, her face was nearly purple and her eyeballs were boggling out of her head. The guitar string had cut into the skin of her neck and a trickle of blood slid down the flesh, curling around her neck into her hair.

Definitely not a pretty sight.

I didn't know if she was expecting anyone to call around or not, so I had to work quickly. Out came the gloves and overshoes and I went to the kitchen for a sharp knife.

Cutting her clothes off didn't take long but I left her knickers on, as the smell was repugnant. I don't know what she normally ate but it didn't smell real flash at the other end.

I'd done the world a favour; there was nothing even remotely attractive about this woman.

Before long, I had her abdomen open and her intestines arranged around her. I flopped her stomach out and noted that her liver was all lumpy with what looked like a growth on it.

Cancer? If that was the case, I had spared her a lot of suffering. Months and months of it. Sitting in a palliative care ward while she slowly died, pumped full of diamorphine (heroin).

No time for self congratulation, breach the diaphragm, make blood and paint walls. I couldn't find a proper brush so I just daubed the stuff on the walls with a sponge I found in the bathroom. Much the same slogans as before.

Until the blood ran out.

Quickly.

Pictures. No flash.

Click. Click. Click.

I found the vacuum cleaner and sponge mop in a cupboard and set to. When I'd finished, I took the bag and hose, along with the other cleaning materials, and popped them into a green shopping bag. Just like before. I left the light on and taking one last look around from the front doorway, stepped out and closed the door.

I stood in the dark entryway, allowing my eyes to adjust to the dark of night as I raised each foot and removed the plastic overshoes before taking off my rubber gloves. They all went into the green bag as well before I walked away, back to the car parked around the block, passing house after house with televisions entertaining the blank faced inhabitants.

Not a soul stirred abroad.

The rest they say, is history.

Chapter 9.

22nd May. Tuesday evening, after the late news.

The body was discovered this morning. The reports hit the media this afternoon or should I say, the excreta hit the fan this afternoon.

The media made such a huge thing of someone who professed being a victim, actually being a victim.

I brought truth to her life/death.

She had presented herself as a type and I had fulfilled her chosen destiny. Helped her actually be a victim. No big deal but the media didn't miss the chance. The media, of branches of it, are like sharks or piranhas, one sniff of blood or a story which had the potential to increase advertising revenue and they circle and feed, biting off whatever chunks are easy to acquire before heading into the fray for more.

I generously gave presenters the opportunity to be self important, fronting their various shows, panels and discussions while making up ever more ridiculous theories to titillate the viewers and win fame and ratings.

Not to mention advertising revenue.

However, I am getting ahead of myself.

When I arrived home from work today, I turned the television on and within thirty minutes there was a newsbreak in the regular programming to announce that a woman's body had been discovered, mutilated in a similar fashion to the North Shore Religious Murders of a fortnight ago. I turned the radio on then and it was having newsbreaks too.

"We interrupt this program to bring you a breaking news item....."

I felt so cool. The results of my handiwork being splashed across the media. This was more like it. Far better than a couple of lines on page eight of a Sunday newspaper. Tonight I was going to watch television. I could check up on all the preposterous crap that some of these so-called journalists spouted.

Spot the journalist versus the sensationalist.

Who actually gets paid more though?

Viewers.

That was all it boiled down to. The lowest common denominator.

Don't get me wrong. I love watching gossip programs about movie stars self destructing, going into prison and/or having drunken raves while driving under the influence of cocaine or whatever. However, when I am watching news or current affairs, I want to see news and current affairs, not some fluff about some old dear being chucked out of her house by her son.

Who cares?

What about the genetically modified food that is about to be grown all over the country. What effects will it have down the food chain?

We are down the food chain.

How little reporting was there on the Federal Environment Minister's inability to reduce the logging of virgin forest in Tasmania? Oh yes, he could do something about the pollution of the sea, that was Federal but the rest was a fait accompli by the pulp mill and the Tasmanian Government.

So, news isn't necessarily news.

It is an arrangement of some of the facts by a business group, one that controls a part of the media, which often has ties to some other entity involved in the story. Ever see the interconnectedness of Company Directors in Australia?

How can news be unbiased? Even dear old auntie ABC has an axe to grind.

I just read this and almost deleted most of the passage. Jeez I rabbit on sometimes. Then again, a lot of people have no idea about some of the stuff I am rabbiting on about. It could be said that I am also using the sensationalist tool for my own preaching. Okay, I put my hand up.

Back to reporting.

The major news programs on television ran the murder as the lead item on their shows with comments and discussion from some notables. The Police Commissioner was right there on the small screen giving some generalised comment but hadn't had enough briefing to be more specific. Police at the scene were not saying a lot but the victim's distraught daughter milked it for everything it was worth. She hadn't discovered the body; she actually lived in another state. Probably left home as soon as possible and hadn't seen her mother since but that didn't matter. It was her instant of fame and celebrity.

News crews in her living room.

She wasn't too hard on the eye and with the right promotion, she could probably milk this for weeks and sell her story to one of the women's magazines and retire.

I wonder how much I could sell my story for? Just who would buy it?

It was me that did the work after all. The daughter just happened to be related to the victim.

I think I was more intimately acquainted with her mother at the end. I even read her fortune in her innards.

Death.

Back to the television. Religious leaders served up opinions, skirting around dishing out responsibility or apportioning blame, meanwhile exonerating their own particular belief system. The poor old Church of the Hanging Christ was caught on the back foot, as most channels ran the current

affairs clip from the previous week, the one about their priest putting the hard word on the present victim.

I noted that it was all presented as fact. I heard no mention of the word alleged or unproven. The poor priest at the centre of the fracas continually denied having made any suggestion to the victim the previous week, or of any wrongdoing whatsoever.

Who bothered to listen?

Tried on National television in the court of Public Opinion.

How can anyone crawl back up out of that hole?

What a brilliant evening. I veged out with a couple of packets of chips and a few beers, flicking from channel to channel with the remote. I'm glowing with pride. Not only have I claimed victim number eight, I've picked the victim most liable to be noticed. I am anonymously famous now. My handiwork is all over the media.

The only fly in the ointment is that the details of the murder were once more suppressed. Police are blanketing it under the 'cult killing' banner which is not quite so satisfactory.

This will have to be my last famous killing though. No more garrotting either. I have already thrown both garrottes away. Dumpsters are so useful. Didn't much like garrotting anyway; especially when the victim's awake.

Bit messy for my tastes.

Shit happens.

I have now amassed a total of eight victims in a relatively short period of time. I am way ahead of schedule and it may be a good time to take a break for a while. Have a holiday so to speak. Maybe even devote a little time to having fun with Barbara.

23rd May. Wednesday night.

I bought all of the daily newspapers today, each one from a different newsagent. Can't be too careful when my freedom is at stake. My book will be worth far more in terms of prurient interest if I am not caught before publication. The Publishers could milk that for every last drop.

Every paper has a front page story about the latest of my killings. No pictures yet, as the police are going over the scene with a fine tooth comb in an attempt to find enough forensic evidence to give them a lead. I am sure I wiped down everything I touched before I put my gloves on. Can they lift DNA from where my knuckles knocked on the front door? I would be very unlucky for that to occur and they have nothing to match it to.

The stories range from journalistic to bizarre.

Cult killings seem to be the order of the day.

I had no idea a Satanist cult had it in for The Church of the Hanging Christ but there it was, mentioned in a story presented by a tabloid newspaper. It must be true; the story is in the paper!

Other leading lights suggest more than one killer.

Another suggests a psychopath. I take exception to that! I am not a psychopath; I am a writer Researching for a book. Just because it happens to be about serial killers is irrelevant and just because I enjoy my Research doesn't make me a psychopath.

Does it?

I wouldn't even refer to myself as a sociopath, although I don't like people much. I may not like them but I don't actively dislike them.

Before you pull me up, I said, actively.

I've even stopped being bothered by the hard-faced bitch thing. Now that I know I could take one out whenever I wanted to.

I cut all of the articles out of the newspapers and magazines and stapled them into my scrapbook. It is starting to look a little more like a scrapbook should, with longer, fold out pieces of newsprint. I can't wait until pictures of what I wrote on the walls are published. In fact, the television news tonight should have them. The police must be finished by now and the brown bag factor will be in play. Maybe those higher up the food chain in the police force block picture taking in big cases for longer than necessary, just to get a bidding war going and drive up the size of the discrete brown paper bag. Who knows? I am sure it is all conjecture on my behalf and the police force is squeaky clean.

After I finished the scrapbook, I had my dinner while watching television and yes, at last, there on the small screen were pictures of my daubings on the walls of the dead house. Not very artistic but that didn't matter because the comparison was made with the artwork from the North Shore Murders. Of course it matched. I knew that it would.

The theories became more extravagant as the evening progressed, later shows trying to outdo the earlier ones for sensationalism. I was in danger of rapidly turning into an armed, religious, revolutionary group intent on harming Christians.

Cool.

Christians have been harming everyone else on the planet for the last nearly two thousand years. It was about time someone else got a look in. I hate monopolies.

See what television does? Suborns the truth. So well, that black turns to white. Although in this case they are painting white into black. I wonder if I should write a letter to a television station and mention that, as the killer, my viewpoint counted and I only picked the bitch because she stood for something I disliked and she wanted to be a victim.

An ugly, manipulative, professional victim who I granted real victim status to. Sort of like a fairy Godmother turning mice into horses.

Do you think the media would take any notice?
Of course not. Fiction sells more papers than truth.

28th May. Monday.

Barbara and I have been discussing all the events surrounding the killings and are getting to know one another's opinions fairly well. Barbara is not condemnatory but is more interested in the why of it all. Her approach is balanced and appears to be evidence based. What a clever woman.

She gets me so hot.

Tania's Sleazy Show is getting a real workout these days.

I have decided to ask Barbara if she wants to go to the beach with me on Saturday. I should be settled by then and the present current events slowing down somewhat.

29th May. Tuesday.

It happened today; I finally plucked up the courage to ask Barbara out on a date. She giggled when I asked her and my heart sank as the Rage started to rise.

I felt like the Incredible Hulk must feel when he starts to alter but Barbara wasn't giggling at me and after a brief chuckle, readily agreed to come to the beach. She suggested Coogee.

Fine by me.

I couldn't help myself and had to ask her what was so funny. She replied that she didn't know. Maybe nervous relief at finally being asked out by me, as she had been waiting a long time for it. Apparently Barbara has dreamed of me asking her out on a date and has wanted to go out with me as much as I wanted to go out with her.

Chemistry?

This is all new territory for me.

I've never had that effect on a girl before.

We spent all lunchtime together again. Her emerald eyes enthrall me and I can look at her face a lot longer while she is talking than I used to be able to. That ability hasn't spread to looking at the other bitches in the face though. I don't really need to anyway. It is a power game and I have nothing to prove. I feel strong inside when I am around the raccoon faces now.

Especially after topping Rosaline.

Shirley caught me staring at her the other day and quickly looked away.

Something must be coming through my eyes.

Death rays.

So, Barbara has been hanging out to go on a date with me for a while now. She is so straight forward and honest. Why did she pick me I wonder? I should just ask her, she is the sort of woman who will give me a straight answer.

Tomorrow, if I get a chance.

Oh shit! Beach. I'll have to wear a 'rashy' and long shorts to hide the scars. I'd forgotten about them. What will Barbara think?

Chapter 10.

2nd June. Saturday.

Barbara turned out to live fairly close to me.

I bought some ice for the obligatory esky and chucked a couple of large bottles of soft drink in it. I didn't really know what to do or what to take. You learn those sorts of things with your family or socially but I'd had no opportunity to do either. I managed to include a travel rug and a couple of towels though. I also remembered to buy some sun screen at the supermarket. It was only as I was driving over to her place that I considered the ethics and mannerliness of taking a beach umbrella or some form of shade tent. Too late, it was so long since I had been on my last outing with a female that I had virtually forgotten the drill.

More to the point, did I care?

Not really.

I pulled up outside of Barbara's place about nine o'clock in the morning and sauntered over to the foyer of the block of apartments, trying to look cool. I didn't get past the front door which nestled in an alcove, shaded by a small roof. Beside the entry door, a vertical row of nametags descended down a metal plate. All with buttons beside them. Ten nametags. Barbara's was the sixth one down. I pushed the button beside her name. There was a little grill next to the button and after a few seconds I heard Barbara's voice saying she would be right down.

She was too.

Safe place to live. Not many surprises. Sensible.

My first view of Barbara outside the work environment was as she descended the stairs in the foyer on the other side of the locked, clear glass door. She was dressed similarly to me in a long sleeved tee-shirt and Bermuda shorts instead of baggies but she did her outfit justice. The tee-shirt was turquoise and long, with fluted and embroidered edges falling over her shorts. That girl had legs.

In fact her bod was rather scrumptious.

As she came through the door, a shy smile on her face, I realised she was wearing makeup. No longer plain looking, her eyes were picked out with kohl and mascara, subtle colours emphasised the shape of her face and her lips were glossy. The skin and flesh of them had the texture of plums but with the colour of ripe strawberries.

They looked very lickable.

I stared.

"Is something wrong?" she asked, a concerned look stealing over her face as her hand edged involuntarily to her mousey coloured hair.

"No, no, not at all. You look great. I've never seen you with makeup on before."

Her face lit up at the compliment as she lifted the bag she had and shook it.

"I brought some sandwiches and things. It'll save us forking out exorbitant prices for food at the beach."

"Great. We can put them in the esky. I brought soft drinks."

She laughed as we walked out to the ute. I loved her laugh, so free and natural, not contrived at all.

Where have you been all my life Barbara?

Coogee. Pretty little spot when the wind is offshore and the sewerage doesn't wash in from further out to sea. Sydney has a pipe that transports sewage way out into the ocean, where it is dumped, raw, on the seabed. It sometimes comes ashore.

Coogee. Not as cosmopolitan or touristy as Bondi up the road but still close to the city. Our luck was in, the sun was shining and the light wind was offshore. The surf wasn't great but there were a few hopefuls in wetsuits sitting their boards, waiting for a decent wave. No one was swimming though.

We were early enough to get a park and didn't have to walk far to the steps leading down to the beach. The bottom of the stairs was the first time I had stood on a sandy beach in five years.

We wandered off to find our sheltered spot in the sun, wearing thongs in case of needles and broken glass. I spread the travel rug after parking the esky and put the towels out as pillows. Barbara dumped her bag and sank down onto the blanket, laying out full length, wriggling her body into the sand beneath. I was anticipating her tee shirt coming off but she didn't remove one article of her clothing. I thought girls/women loved to get their bodies exposed to the sun and naturally a bikini or skimpy one-piece should have been the way to go. It was not to be and I didn't get to rub sun blocker into her back either.

After an hour or so of idle chatter, lying in the early winter sun and getting hotter, I felt the time had come, so I mentioned going for a swim. Barbara looked over at me, pulling her sunglasses down to make eye contact and said, ever so sweetly.

"I never usually go to the beach and I definitely don't swim in public."

I was a bit stunned and nonplussed as I sulkily replied.

"Then why did you agree to come to the beach with me?"

"Because I thought it was where you liked to go and I really wanted to go out with you."

She sat up as she spoke, regarding me over the top of her shades.

What an idiot I had been. Instead of asking where she would like to go, I had assumed and assumed wrongly in this case. The amazing thing was, I wasn't too fussed about the beach either. I had to explain my error of assumption.

"I never normally go to the beach either. I haven't been in five years."

"Then why invite me to come here?"

"Because I thought you might like it."

There was a pause, which lengthened, and then we burst out laughing, simultaneously. The ice was not only broken, it was shattered and melted. Barbara gave me a pretend sleazy look, up and down, slowly, before stage whispering.

"Let's go!"

We chatted amiably in the ute on our way into the city, about attractions we'd both like to see and finally settled on visiting a venue I had virtually toured with Aunt Mary and theoretically, knew quite well, having never been there.

Remember, I told you about Aunt Mary making me memorise facts about every major attraction in Sydney. I had to be able to give my mother details of where I

had supposedly been when I returned from those sexual encounters with my willing Aunt.

The actuality was far better than the virtual trip. Although when I was younger, nothing could even come close to the joy and wonderment of a passionate afternoon spent with Aunt Mary.

I left that memory alone.

It led down some very dark corridors.

The Sydney Aquarium, down at Darling Harbour, was a delight to visit. The impossible piled onto the incredible. Walking under the water in a dry tunnel while all around swam sharks and rays, with huge turtles slowly sculling past. And the fish! Large open areas of tanks with schools of fish circulating around them, flashing above our heads. There were crayfish in niches in the rock walls. It was a magical underwater tour, after which, as we walked back up the wharf, I relaxedly slid my arm around Barbara's waist. She leant against me as we walked and put her arm around my waist in return.

I felt as though she was an old friend.

It was as though I'd known her for years, not months. We could talk about nearly anything. She was smart and funny and totally unpretentious.

Our lunch was consumed sitting in a shady spot, overlooking the Chinese Garden in Darling Harbour. I must say that Barbara's sandwiches far exceeded, in taste and consistency, anything my Mother could ever dream of.

Darling Harbour was becoming busier and noisier as shoppers and tourists drifted down from the city as most of the smaller city shops shut for Saturday afternoon. The monorail stopped at its station on the other side of Darling Harbour, disgorging load after load of pedestrians to add to the growing throng perambulating around the attractions.

"So why don't you go swimming?" Barbara asked me out of the blue.

Damn, I would have to tell her now. This could be the end of a beautiful friendship, although I believe Barbara isn't that shallow.

Is she?

"The straight answer is because my arms, thighs and chest are covered with scars and I am too embarrassed to be seen in public. I used to cut myself during my late teens. Haven't since but the marks are something I will carry forever."

I hung my head, a little ashamed, while I told her.

Her response threw me for a loop.

She smiled non-committedly and in what sounded akin to business-like tones said,

"I'd like to go home now please."

That was it?

Talk about scars and she wants to go home? I was distraught but kept a fixed smile on my face as I packed the esky up and we walked silently back to the ute. During the drive back, Barbara chatted as though nothing was going on. It was the most pleasant brush-off I had ever had but I wasn't happy. She directed me into a parking space at her building and invited me upstairs.

This was odd I thought, as we walked up the stairs. A brush-offee doesn't usually gain access to an apartment and is never passed through the front door. What was going on? To say I was confused was only half of it.

Me, a cold reptilian predator.
Confused?

Barbara lived on the third floor out of five; two apartments per floor. The view was acceptable, with the Gladesville Bridge occupying part of it, although other apartment buildings jutted up here and there blocking some of the view. She shut the front door behind us and asked me to take a seat in the living room while she freshened up. I ambled into the living room and stood enjoying the view through the glass sliding doors to the balcony for a moment before choosing one end of the couch to sit on. I made myself comfortable and had only been in the seat for a moment when Barbara entered the room.

My jaw dropped.

She had shed her long sleeved tee-shirt and Bermuda shorts and stood before me in a small, black, thong bikini. It wasn't her body that blew me away, although she was really well put together. It was that which crawled over it.

From knee to elbow, her body writhed with tattoos. Colours and lines swirled and splashed, mythical beasts sported among fantastical machines and alien landscapes. It was totally bizarre and beautiful. From her sternum up, the colours and lines formed a widening neckline which encircled her neck giving the impression of a collarless top with a plunging cleavage.

I just sat, enchanted, with my mouth hanging open as she turned slowly in front of me.

The rotation stopped and a look of concern crossed her face.

"What? Don't you like it?"

The smile which had been hiding behind my face flashed into existence.

"Like it? I love it. What imagination."

My voice tapered off as I became absorbed in the dragon which curved around her right thigh, progressed up her back and peeked over her left shoulder just above the alien looking creature which arose from under her left arm.

Her response was to smile and remove her top. Her breasts were inked also.

She crooked her finger at me.

"Let's bathe together. You can wash me after I've washed you."

I didn't need asking twice.

Amazingly, we didn't rush. It wasn't the thirsty man from the desert gulping down water nor was it the refugee when the food parcel hits. Rather, we drifted in toward each other like two heavenly bodies caught in each other's gravitational pull.

Her apartment was not new and had been built in the era when a bath was a bath, not a large handbasin. The tub filled slowly and we kissed softly and gently in between her attending to the water. Barbara grinned mischievously before tipping bubble bath into the stream of water running from the spout. Before long there was a thick layer of bubbles on the surface of the water. As she bent to attend to the taps, her breasts fell gently forward under the effects of gravity and I thanked the foresight of wearing baggy shorts. Her tattoos seemed to take on a life of their own, writhing as she moved between me and the taps.

Too soon the bath was ready and Barbara grasped the bottom of my 'rashy' and raised her eyebrows. Dutifully, I raised my arms above my head and she pulled

my top nearly all the way off before letting it go. As I was struggling to remove it, I felt quick hands on the fastening of my shorts and a giggle as they were pulled down. With difficulty I might add. I think that was what the giggle was about. I finally struggled out of my top as my swimming trunks went south.

A satisfactory small gasp followed that manoeuvre.

I didn't have much clothing to remove from Barbara apart from the thong and it was only a moment until we were up to our chins in hot water and bubbles.

How wonderful it was to be soaped and washed.

All over.

Then it was my turn to wash down Barbara, massaging and soaping every inch of her body.

The water started to grow cold so we got out of the bath.

After we'd dried each other, we retired to her bedroom and lay on her bed, me obviously tumescent but not in any hurry. Barbara's bedroom was soft. A parachute was hung from the ceiling with the light above it. This diffused the light and softened outlines. The walls were plain but hung with pictures which teased the eyes and her bedcover was a fake fur tiger skin. Yeah, I know, kitsch. It wasn't though. That bedcover fitted in with the rest of the decor and was really pleasant to lie on. Ticklish almost.

Barbara lay on her stomach while I perused the art etched into her back in detail before she turned over for me to view the front. I traced designs with my fingers all over her inked section, which resulted in some delicious squirming and mewling. Especially when I traced the oddity climbing out of her vagina, shaved to display the tattoo to best effect.

Then it was her turn.

She counted my scars, insistently touching each one with curiosity, running her finger over the cicatrices of uneven healing before kissing it.

It was like a benediction.

Suffice to say, our bodies fitted well together and her little gasping breaths at climax were a reward beyond compare, and a boost to my ego. We stayed in her apartment until I left for home, late the following night.

In case I didn't mention it, I don't like 'pets'.

Barbara didn't have one. What a relief.

During a relaxing Sunday, mostly spent in bed, we compared notes on every person who worked in the same sorting office as us. We found our viewpoints were remarkably similar and I was a little shaken when Barbara brought up the subject of Rosaline. Bit too close to home for me but I was pleasantly surprised at what she had to say.

"Nasty piece of work that one. She came up to me on my first day at work and told me you liked being known as 'Shooter'. I could see the evil amusement in her eyes, so I refrained from using the term. When I asked her later how you got that nickname, she took great delight in telling me. In detail. Then in the same breath she asked if I wanted to move in with her. I stopped talking to Rosaline about then. I was a little relieved when she was killed, as I didn't have to deal with her at work any more. I reckon she deserved it. Nasty bitch."

Barb caught the look on my face. "Sorry, did I speak out of turn?"

I collected myself. “No, no. I was just remembering how difficult she could be. Her and her cohort of so-called friends.”

“Them, wouldn’t give five cents for the lot of them. Could you imagine having to live with one? It would almost be as bad as living with one of those beer-bellied, horse racing, couch potatoes I see at work everyday. Only those bitches would be meaner. Shit they’re back stabbers. Can’t trust them.”

The fire eased from her voice and her eyes shone as she continued.

“I really am delighted to see you on the days you have your lunch at the depot. I do so enjoy sitting and talking with you.”

To match her words, a hand trailed its fingers along my side and I shivered with delight at her touch.

Sorry. That’s it. The rest is private and starting to sound a little like a Romance novel. Which is not what this Diary is about. Although I could play around with Romance in the private parts of it. Giggle.

Damn. I appear to have been infected with Editor germs. I just caught myself wondering about conveying Barbara’s character. It is not as if these sections are going to be read, as they will give too much away. I suppose this train of thought is part of a new writing style I’m adopting called, ‘put every fucking thing down I can think of and get them to delete the bits they don’t want’. The written part of the Research will not be very long but by inserting all the newspaper clippings and photographs of the murders throughout the text, it will be padded out enough to make a serial diary.

Barbara. Doesn’t like Barb, Barbi or Babs. She prefers to be called Barbara and I think she is a natural blond but as her nether regions are shaved, I can’t tell for sure. Barbara comes across as bland and not very stylish when you first meet her, as well as a bit of a dreamy type but that is all a cover. In actuality she is very clever and observant and doesn’t miss much. In addition, Barbara is kind and emotively rewarding. I know, you think I’m just saying all this stuff because we had sex.

Wrong.

I know all that stuff because she showed herself to me while we were together on our date. In little ways I discovered the person she really is. Honesty is important in a relationship, although how I could ever mention the serial killings, sorry, Research, I have performed so far is beyond me. I guess I’ll have to lie by omission, although I am not happy with that either. It is better than her finding out though, as she would run screaming for the hills and I would lose a newly found friend and lover.

Her tattoos are another interesting facet of her approach to life. They make up a story which has a beginning, a middle but no end yet and the pictures tell it all.

I’ll try to describe them.

Her right arm from elbow to shoulder is an amazing piece of art which she informed me is based on a picture by someone named Geiger, whoever that is. It makes her arm look as though it is part machine. You can see past some of the levers to the supports underneath. Her left arm from elbow to shoulder is a multi

coloured serpent in a rainforest environment. Its body is partially covered with leaves as it peers out of the foliage. The outside of her right knee is where the dragon starts. It coils up the front of her thigh before ducking between her legs and continuing up over her right buttock. Each of the dragon's rear clawed feet rests on the top of each side of her bottom, the top of a wall. The body of the dragon extends up her back with a front foot grasping each shoulder and the head extending over her left shoulder. It is very impressive.

To the left of the dragon's body on her back is a scene with water and a large carp sliding out from under a lily pad, on the other side are clouds, clearing to reveal a night sky with some large planets. Her buttocks are the wall of a castle which leads to a courtyard on her left thigh, containing a woman sitting on a stone bench, head in hands, while a knight is dragged away by the heels. The rest of her right thigh is clouds through which the dragon tail weaves.

Her front. Mmmm. An alien being peers from under her left arm, just beneath the dragon's head. Right breast is the sun, in reds and oranges while the left is the moon, in shades of grey, craters picked out in bold relief. Both sit above a scene of a prehistoric sea with a plesiosaur swimming around her stomach. Its eye is her navel. Further south, at the V of her body, the sea darkens to form a dark recess from which octopus tentacles writhe. She keeps herself shaved so as not to cover her 'art'. Front left thigh is the Knight's horse.

I could spend hours looking at the pictures and have.

Well, that's about it for now. Except that I am writing this while stoned, listening to Pink's second album, 'Try This'. Pink has that mischief which Barbara exhibits occasionally and Tania Torqs is quite happy to play it for me as I write.

I had a big 'smoke' when I arrived home and seem to be getting through it a bit. I have no idea where to buy more when I run out. Guess that's a problem for 'Ron'. Later Ron.

I can understand now why so many people smoke this stuff. It pushes the pleasure centre button while changing reality a bit. Unlike alcohol, which in excess turns me a bit feral, this stuff just makes me happy. The fact that music sounds a little sharper and more vibrant and that colours and shapes are either crystal clear or blended at the edges like a child's colouring exercise has little to do with it. The stuff just plain makes me feel happy.

And that is a crime.

Especially since no excise tax is paid.

I am weary and a little sore from trysting with Barbara so I'm off to bed. What a glorious weekend. I bet the psychologists blame the grass for the multiple murders, even though I found it during the commission of the second one.

Wouldn't surprise me in the least but I know the truth of it.

The killings are just Research for this book.

That's all.

Chapter 11.

7th June. Thursday.

What am I going to do? The press, radio and television are still going on about my handiwork. Some of the theories being propounded are patently absurd but expert after expert is appearing in some form of media giving opinions about what they believe is occurring.

I worry about this country.

If this is the calibre of the people running various parts of it, we are in big trouble. Most of the crap propounded is self serving bullshit. Everyone is pushing their own barrow. Joe public is getting seriously worked over. I have yet to hear one expert express doubt regarding the religious motivation behind the murders. I would have thought it obvious the slogans, daubed on the walls in blood, are too confused to have been the coherent message of any one group.

Fat chance of that.

The Federal Government didn't want to get involved but in view of the possible terrorist implications, it had to and the Federal Police moved in. ASIO was probably not far behind. Lucky for me, the Feds left the responsibility for the bulk of the fieldwork and criminal investigation to the lemma State Government who rightly passed it on to the regular police force.

No one really has a clue what is going on. I need to shake them up some more as the publicity angle is great. My handiwork is so famous that I feel less need to get the Diary of a Serial Killer published. However, I set out to kill a dozen people as a study into the mentality of a Serial Killer and I should finish what I started.

The published book will be the culmination of the exercise.

Should almost be a shoe in with the publicity I'm getting.

How much does 'characterisation' and 'voice' count in the face of so much publicity about the events? I need to make the next killings more spectacular.

Move over Claudius, the circus is coming to town.

Question is, what am I going to cause death with next? I have an inbuilt desire to cut but that may affect me more than I wish it to. Alternatively, I may get a blast out of knifing someone to death.

So far I've used blunt force trauma, suffocation, drugs plus garroting then just garroting. I would love to discover what a knife going into a body feels like as I cause that body's death.

Who?

What about a Roman Catholic Priest?

No?

How about two of them?

Now, there's another walking-around oxymoron.
 Thou must not sin but we can sample little boys.
 We never marry but advise wedded couples about their marriage.
 The Church holds out its hand for money but doesn't spend its own on the poor and needy.
 Who could believe in an institution that decided on its own arrangement of books for the Bible and centuries ago, used to auction the position of Pope, Head of the Roman Catholic Church, to the highest bidder?
 Then there was the Inquisition thing and the Witch hunts.
 And the hiding of conflicting religious information below the Vatican.
 Not to forget a ban on birth control in a world gone mad with exploding population levels. It might reduce the take from the plate, having lower numbers of fervent Catholics.
 Then there are always exorcisms of people with mental diseases.
 And Bedlam, let's not forget Bedlam.
 You downtrodden, female, second class Roman Catholics may or may not agree with the Church's system but it doesn't matter one way or the other.
 The Catholic Church is patriarchal.

Yes, two Catholic priests will be the next victims. The Vatican stirs things up when priests are massacred. Maybe I will displease the Pope.
 Cool.

A knife in the guts. No, up through the heart would be better. Less yelling and a quick death. Virtually no blood if I get it right. I'll have to kill them close together temporally or it might make the second killing difficult. (I didn't misspell temporary but I don't have time to explain it).
 I need a knife. A pointy one with a solid blade, preferably iron so I can get it razor sharp. Both sides. Like a stiletto. An Italian style of knife for a Roman Catholic priest. Sounds about right. I wonder if drawing a chalk pentacle on the floor around each priest's body would increase the media circus.
 I must find some chalk.

To the garage.

I poked around for a while and found some sticks of white chalk in a box of five. They were like the candy cigarettes we used to get from the milk bar when I was a little tacker. The knife proved elusive and I didn't feel like moving stacks of junk out of the way to do a deeper exploration of my garage so I soon sank to floor level. Kneeling, looking through old cupboards and suchlike, poring through junk which would have a use somewhere, sometime but not right now.

The kneeling must have been symbolic.

I almost gave up but found a box in the bottom of a cupboard on my last poke around. Cardboard I think but covered with a fancy black leatherette and about thirty centimetres long. I lifted it out of the

cupboard and crawled backward from under the table until I could stand up. There was a rag handy and I dusted the box down before placing it on the table. I stood there, just staring at it. Prescient goose bumps ran up and down my spine.

My garage is a pretty scary place really. I know I said it provided everything I needed and was the end of a black hole.

Well that was all in jest.

However, it has provided every tool I needed for my Research. That is, every tool I used to cause death and that box on the table was just lying there, waiting to be opened.

What exactly did it contain?

I drew breath and picked up the box with my left hand, before gently and carefully removing the lid with my right. There, in a plush red-velvet cut-out lay a carving knife and fork set, along with a steel for touching up the edge of the long knife. Deer antler handles on all three pieces no less.

The blade of the carving knife was business-like and solid, not flexible like modern ones. The sharp end was not pointed enough for penetrating priests though. It was covered with a dusting patina of rust, with the odd pitting here and there. Must be quite old and made in the days before stainless steel became really popular for kitchen knives. I would have to change the shape of the blade slightly and sharpen both sides of it.

Another job for Ron.

10th June. Sunday night.

This weekend Barbara and I drove up to Katoomba in the Blue Mountains. Although the ambience of the place was twee tourism, the natural beauty of the whole area more than made up for it. We stayed overnight in a motel and next day took a run in the ute to Jenolan Caves. Magical. Both the caves and the weekend.

I seem to be doing less writing now, is that a good thing or a bad thing? Can computers become jealous? I sincerely hope not, as Tania and I have an extremely good working relationship and I would hate to damage that.

I must write.

It keeps me normal.

11th June.

Yeah, I know, this is still the 'private' font. I am putting as much as possible into the book story now but still need the protection of anonymity.

So.

Barbara and I don't carry on like lovers at work. We do sit together and talk but that is a pattern that was set up ages ago. I just have lunch in the lunchroom more often. The fatbellies and the sluts have become used to our behaviour and ignore it. If we started to sit with our arms around one another, kissing and cuddling, there would be unrest and confusion at work. The routine would have been changed. Oh no!

How many places do you know of where the workers leave their brains at home and switch to routine as soon as they step out of the front door? All day the simple routine carries them through a thoughtless existence until they reach home again and pick up their brains.

Maybe.

Or they might just go to the pub. Now there's a brainless entertainment. Some people must only have their brains in while they sleep. What a waste. Is it any wonder the population is dumbing down?

So, back to the work environment. We didn't change our working relationship and keep our secret for ourselves. Barbara is the only person there who knows of my scars. In fact, besides that one previous girlfriend and the woman doctor who helped me, she is one of only three people who know of my scarring. My mother doesn't know of them. I don't think I want her to see the physical manifestation of what she did to my mind.

The flip side is that, besides Barbara's tattooist, who I felt a little jealous of, I am probably the only other person who knows of her tattoos. We have secrets and these secrets gave us something more than lust and trust.

Call it intimacy.

I worked in the garage for a while when I got home tonight. I found a bastard file (seriously, that is what they are called, bastard files) tucked away on top of a chest of drawers. I clamped the knife into a vice and filed the end to a nice sharp point. I also filed the blunt side of the knife and the blade until both of them were relatively sharp. It was starting to look more like a stiletto now. The next action would be to run the knife over a sharpening stone to fine the edge down before the final steeling took the feathers off. It will still take a little while to finish properly. The deer antler handle is seriously cool and rough enough to provide a grip, even when wet and slippery with blood. It has a little guard between it and the blade. Very useful. It will save getting too deep into a religious experience. I am glad of the physical work, the nights are definitely cooling down now as winter insinuates itself into the end of autumn.

Why didn't I just buy a knife?

Two words, Big Brother.

Surveillance is becoming more and more commonplace. There may just be a camera in the store where I bought the knife. Forensic examination of the knife wound would lead to the re-creation of the blade shape and length. Subsequently, every store stocking that type of knife would be visited and questions asked. This way is better. Thanks to my garage. No trace of the knife appears in any records and once I had used a stone on it, the blade would be deadly.

Good word that.

Deadly.

14th June. Thursday.

I finished the knife off tonight. I used the stone I found in one of the drawers of the old sideboard in the garage and made that old iron blade sharp enough to shave with, after I passed the steel over it. I guess I should make some sort of sheath for my new toy out of leather. If I can find some that is. Otherwise I will use something else like thick webbing or anything suitable I manage to discover.

15th June. Friday.

Today I told Barbara that I had something to do on Sunday morning, early, so I wouldn't stay at her place all Saturday night. She was very adult about it all and never even started in with the usual feminine first degree of Who, Where, Why etc.

How refreshing. The more time I spend with her, the more time I want to spend with her. I think I could manage permanently, but that leaves the spectre of my Research to sort out. Worst case scenario is that she goes to the cops if I tell her. That would seriously affect my ability to conclude my Research. A conundrum.

18th June. Monday.

Yesterday I went to Mass. No, I'm not a Catholic but I wanted to check out the timeline and see if there is a time when I can do the Research task and draw a pentacle around the body without being disturbed. I decided to go into the city really early and observe the train of events of a normal Sunday morning.

Parking the car well back from St. Paul's, I observed the priest arrive at about five thirty a.m., in the dark, and unlock the back door to enter the Cathedral. I saw the light go on toward the rear of the edifice, maybe an office or changing room, who knows. He was there for about twenty minutes before the first people of the next group arrived. I guess they were part of the support team, like the organ player (that's not a joke by the way) or the bloke who waves the smoking thing around. They would have to get into their costumes too. Mass started at six thirty a.m., by which time the church was half full. I know because I was sitting toward the rear, right beside the aisle. Hood on my hoody pulled well up.

The 'mad' monk.

Churches, what a con. Don't get me wrong, the building is beautiful, with its vaulted stone arches heading toward heaven and joining in the darkness far above. This gives a huge enclosed, echoing space where the singing resonates as it climbs, entwined with the organ music. You really need a large organ to make enough sound to fill that space. It's all designed to effect a feeling of smallness and insignificance down there in the pews. Not really friendly, making someone feel small and insignificant before you tell them they have been bad and God will punish the guilty some time in the future.

When they are dead.

That's not all. Those beautiful, expensive, stained glass windows, extravagant to the extreme, do not function in a sensible way. They admit only low levels of light into the gloomy interior of the cathedral which makes it difficult to see details and the contrast of the candles appears very bright. On top of that, you can't stare out of the windows if you are bored or uncomfortable because they are set high up in the walls. I mentioned uncomfortable because the wooden pews really gave my backside a hard time.

I had to sit on the kneeling cushion. Just to last the distance. It would be difficult to fall asleep in those pews.

What a pain in the arse.

There were cameras too. Small and difficult to see. I would have to be careful to keep my face shadowed.

These places of worship are cleverly designed to manipulate the emotions of the flock. This assists the priest in instilling the fear of God into the congregation. Well mate, I intend instilling the fear of Authors into the priests. I snuck out half way through the ceremony while everyone was kneeling and the priest had his head bowed.

Lettuce spray.

I left the Cathedral and headed for another, smaller, Roman Catholic church up in the Cross, where I was just in time to observe the congregation leaving after the morning Mass. The sign out front said that the regular Sunday Service commenced at ten thirty. It was just past eight at the moment and before long there was only one car remaining parked in the church car park. I presumed it must be the priest's.

My short observations had given me two separate times when a priest would be available for my particular brand of Research and the drawing of a pentacle around the body. One observation was not enough for safety; I needed to be sure of the timing and check if there were any cameras inside the second church.

There were cameras outside.

Who would go to work at six on a Sunday morning to sit and watch camera footage of street and mall scenes? First qualification, journeyman voyeur.

I sat in my car until it was time to attend the morning service in the smaller church. I had to check out the inside of it. I was curious about the congregation and what drew it to this church, so I followed them in.

Although small, it was ornate, with carved columns and the odd bit of gilt. The carvings, of climbing branches, gave an almost sylvan relief to the upright columns, a theme that was carried through as the branches devolved into leaves further up where the columns spread out to bear load. I carefully cased the whole place out, mostly to see if there were

any cameras and there were, similar to those outside on the street but not as small and modern as those in the Cathedral.

I had my hoody pulled up the whole time and was careful about where I sat, using the columns for basic line of site cover. No one troubled me; I stood when everyone else arose and knelt at the appropriate times. I didn't need to understand what was happening; I just played 'Simon Says'.

My only concern was that news of a murder at the Roman Catholic Cathedral, prior to Mass, may reach the smaller church before the end of Mass and leave my second victim unavailable. More study of the situation was required.

It bothers me. There are just too many cameras in and around this church so I will have to find somewhere else. It means looking in the phone book or Gregory's Street Directory but I need a more private venue than the Cross.

Hang on. What was I thinking? 'I need a more private venue than the Cross'. Don't be silly.

Imagine the headlines.

PRIEST FOUND DEAD AT CROSS.

Sorry, it will have to be here. I will have to rely on wearing a hoody for anonymity.

Big W, here I come. Disposable shoes, pants and another hoody. To replace the one I am wearing of course.

I left the church with everyone else and headed over to Barbara's apartment. Light rain had started to fall and the day had turned nippy. Not a day for outdoor pursuits so we decided to go to the movies.

Neither of us was keen on sappy romantic pap so we ended up catching a movie called 'Crank' with Jason Statham in it.

What a rush!

We both enjoyed it a lot and celebrated with Hungry Jacks afterwards. I was amazed at how much Barbara could pack away in that trim bod. She supersized everything on top of a double Whoppa, then followed it with an ice-cream. Maybe a full tum was why she insisted on the female superior position later. I don't care who's superior when it comes to sex.

This morning was a bit of a scramble but we woke early and had time for breakfast together before I ducked over home for my work clothes. I still took public transport to work as I didn't want those idiots there to know that I had a vehicle, or what sort it was.

Did you notice the we? I was not going to mention it but I have a girlfriend. No, I am not going to give you her name. She is lovely and we get on well. That is all you need to know apart from the fact she isn't privy to my Research.

Speaking of vehicles. I had an intense desire to put flash wheels and those rubber band tyres on the car the other day. Where did that come from? I have the funds but it was the most stupid idea I'd had in a long time. How did it get into my head? I don't want to be one of the crowd. Anyhow, anything that makes my car stand out is contra indicated.

21st June.

Thursday night seems to have become my main writing night at the moment. I explained to my girlfriend that I used evenings to write in and that it was necessary for my well being to do so. She wants to come and check my place out but I have managed to wiggle out of her visiting me for now. I think I maintained that the house must feel like a sanctum to me, to give me the necessary edge for creation. She expressed a desire to read one of my books so I loaned her 'Dead but Unafraid', my fourth book. It is not brilliant but adds a whole new, previously untapped component to the 'zombie' novel.

It's written from the zombie's point of view.

I finished sharpening the knife and it is a fine piece of work. On Tuesday I used an old leather belt to make a sheath for it, as it is too sharp to handle safely. It was easier than I expected. All I had to do was double a piece of wide leather belt and drill holes down the sides to take the stitching. Then I cut the front flap off and made the back a bit longer to double over and stitch for a belt loop. I was now armed.

All I needed was more reconnaissance to get the timing right.

Amazingly, the current affairs mob are still working the 'Church of the Hanging Christ' murders over but you could see that the experts had run out of steam in their attempts at whipping up sensationalism.

Aussie Serial Killers – 'we'll save ya.'

You may have noticed a slight easing up on the cynicism. The cynicism hasn't diminished but the love of a good woman and regular sex goes a long way to taking the edge off it. The sarcasm remains.

With extremely irregular sex, testicles tend to overfill and groan at the seams from an excess of spermatozoa, causing them to adopt a bluish tinge. At those taught testicle times, everything is a pain. Compassion and understanding are immaterial compared to the ache in your balls.

At such times it is difficult to fully appreciate, for example, how a lesbian bull dyke, working as a social worker, can fairly advise married couples on their matrimonial problems.

Pity the poor husband. Nudge, nudge. Wink, wink.

He'll pay. It's his fault. It has to be.

Once those same testicles are hanging loose and taking up far less room, the attitude changes to.

'If those silly buggers listen to her, then tough titty.'

The rightness and wrongness of those types of situations become immaterial in the pleasantly drained, lazy satisfaction of soft balls. If a couple of dickheads can't sort out their own marital problems and invite the Politically Correct Government to become involved, that's their problem. Not mine.

The Government. State or Federal. Don't get me started. They both keep passing rafts of legislation, with more and more penalties for minor infringements but don't seem to help the needy with much any more. All our Governments do is wave an ever increasingly large stick around to make one and all comply. I read in the paper the other day that there are over forty thousand separate things we can be fined for. Forty thousand! Unless you happen to be rich or famous.

They have different rules to us mere mortals.

Don't believe me?

How about the latest rash of media tell-alls? Not forgetting that the perpetrators get paid for these stories. Something along the lines of.

'I've been taking illegal drugs for years but now I want to go straight.'

What sort of bullshit is that? What is really meant is:-

'Now I've been outed, I better confess. There's a buck in it if I play it right.'

If I went to the police station and made a confession to snorting cocaine over a considerable length of time, the response would be to rip my house apart and probably jail me.

Do I want to test this theory?

No thank you.

25th June. Monday night.

Saturday I explained to my lady friend that I was Researching a new book which involved me turning up early to church on Sunday morning. This devolved into a generalised theological discussion where we both espoused our views and opinions on the various religions around the world.

It turns out that neither of us believes in the Christian God of death and vengeance. (Have a look through Leviticus sometime and see if you should be stoned to death for some minor offence or killed more mercifully). That was no real surprise as I didn't take her for a super religious sort. However, she did surprise me by talking of her belief in the Power of Diana the Huntress. Apparently there is a flourishing cult of Diana worshippers. Not that Diana, although there must be some followers backing both.

This belief of hers had come about because the moon affects her strongly, something I didn't know.

Apparently, as the moon waxed, usually in the week before the full moon, she becomes more active and more nocturnal until on the nights of the full moon she hardly sleeps at all.

In Roman mythology, Diana the Huntress drove the chariot, containing the moon, across the evening/night time sky. My girlfriend was built like a Huntress and there was some basic similarity between her and the statue of Diana in the Hyde Park fountain.

While she is in this phase of alertness, she likes to go out at night and walk the streets. We discussed the word prowling and she agreed it was probably prowling. In fact she had been pulled up by the police at 4am. one morning and warned about the dangers of being out alone.

They haven't felt her muscles.

I found out in that conversation that the woman I am coming to love has also studied martial arts for years and is a black belt Wing Chun exponent. Mental note to self, 'Do not piss her off.'

The Diana worship thing is no biggie. She keeps a small statuette of Dianna on her sideboard and leaves small offerings to it.

Mostly food. The odd sticky sweet from a pocket, a small piece of chocolate and strangely, the condom we used the first time we had sex. She has gone onto the pill now, so we don't use condoms any more. She's not gross; she washed it out first, before draping it over the statuette. I have no idea how it all works but it keeps her happy.

As the moon wanes, active girl settles down and even becomes a little depressed. Nothing major but she made a point of telling me so I could understand her mood changes if I visited during a full moon. As if any male could understand a woman's mood changes. I try, and sometimes get it right.

Yesterday, I arose and snuck away really early in the morning, well before dawn, to once more check my priests out. No change. The Bishop, for that's who the priest of the Cathedral is, arrived early and went to his (robing?) room and it was half an hour before the rest of the performing troupe arrived. That would allow me plenty of time to kill the chief honcho and draw the pentacle around his body. If I could lock his dressing room door as I left, it may be a while before the body was discovered. That would give me more of a chance to complete my Research with the second priest.

Next Sunday will be appropriate. Two more victims.

Less than two weeks after the shortest day. I wonder if I can link the killings to a pagan sacrifice.

Nah, blaming the enemies of the Church of the Hanging Christ will do. It will appear as if the mentally deranged killers have broadened their horizon to include Roman Catholic priests now. Or that copycats are at

work. The media may even make up some interesting connections or supply information on potentially responsible organisations. It could be quite an entertaining circus. Bring on the clowns.

Chapter 12.

28th June.

It's bloody cold tonight. Yeah, it's Thursday, writing night. Barbara is warm and cosy at her place and I am stuck here writing. Sorry Tania, I didn't really mean stuck. Yes, I would like to see something titillating.

Is that for real?

Enough or I will never get any writing done.

The priest gig is rapidly drawing closer. I think I have way passed Rage on, Rage off. I have matured. This project and the Research were initiated to get into the mind of a serial killer and there you are. I have done it. Success.

So, how do I think now?

Having a relationship with an attractive woman, especially one I am developing deep feelings for, has awakened Passion. Passion is replacing Rage. Passion is stronger than Rage. It can be applied with a huge amount of force across many different emotions while Rage requires anger.

Anger can blind.

I can feel Passionate about my Research and use the depth of the Passion for Power. This must be what fuels terrorists. No wonder they are so sudden. A whole mob of people feeling this way is scary. I wonder if our Keepers are so Passionate about stopping them?

I am going to top the priests this weekend. Make that, top the Bishop and a priest. Real chess, pawn doing Research takes Bishop, and a priest for good measure. I am a bit scared, a little excited and very Passionate about my mission. Above all else, do not get caught.

1st July.

Really early in the morning, about one o'clock. I have just returned from a beautiful day out with Barbara.

I think I'm in love.

I took her to the zoo of all places. Taronga Park Zoo to give it its full name. She hadn't been before and I had only had a predator tour.

We thought it would be fun.

Barbara wore some jeans that looked like they'd been sprayed on, tucked into boots with a tee shirt and jacket. She looked great and I think I had a hard on for most of the day. I know I felt quite proud, as blokes were checking her wherever we went. You know, looking but not looking. Especially the ones with a female companion. Wondering how someone like me had ended up with a woman like her.

The usual.

It was one of those sunny winter days, in the early twenties with hardly any wind or clouds. The animals were out to catch a bit of sun after the rainy, cold week

we'd just had and nearly every enclosure we visited had contented animals either eating or lolling in the warm rays. Some of the young ones were playing, leaping around the place but mostly it was a scene of ease and contentment.

Apart from the predators. They wanted to be off predating.

The salty crocs were almost motionless, apart from the odd gaping of the jaw when they became too hot in the sun. That's how they cool off you know, evaporate moisture from the softer tissues of the mouth which causes cooling of the blood. When they get too hot they go back into the water. A salty croc likes to be above 26° C for comfort. Did you also know that the sex of crocodiles hatching out of eggs is determined by the temperature the eggs are incubated at? So, you ask, how do you know so much about crocs? Answer; a DVD, the internet and a deep and compelling interest in those amazing reptilian predators. Two hundred million years is a long time.

The animal feeling rubbed off on us and we had a lazy day at the Zoo, wandering in the sunshine. As the cool of late afternoon made itself felt, we left the Zoo and enjoyed an intimate meal at a suburban Chinese restaurant before returning home to Barbara's apartment, after dark, for more intimacy. The animal feeling continued as we made long, slow love. Passion building to a satisfying climax for both of us.

I had better get to bed now. I have a big morning coming up. My mind is racing though and I find that my hands are trembling. Will I sleep?

Goodnight Tania Torq's.

1st July. Later.

What a fuck up! I can hardly write this down, my hands are shaking so much. The killings were such a rush. I invoked Passion but things didn't quite go without a hitch this time. I better go have a shower now and wash the blood off before I continue. I just wanted to talk to someone and Tania was waiting for me when I arrived home, ready to listen patiently. I really messed up and I am frightened now.

The CCTV cameras could have seen.

Oh God I hope not.

What the Hell! I just killed two priests, or rather a priest and a Bishop and I am calling on God. I am more upset than I thought. I don't believe in that myth, nohow. Never mind, time for a shower.

September.

A half hour later.

I'm back. I've washed the blood out of my hair and off my face and arms and managed to calm down a little. My jeans are stained from where the track pants were splattered with the stuff and.... Yeah, okay, I'll explain. I got up in the early hours of this morning. It was pretty cold and pitch dark. My stomach felt peculiar, nerves I guess. I had a piece of toast and a cup of tea for breakfast before pulling my new track pants on over my

jeans and easing my old hoody on over my tee shirt. No point wearing the new one as I had already appeared on camera in my old one. I already wore my new running shoes. The front of the hoody has a hand warmer on it. You know the type. Where your hands meet in the middle. It was ideal for concealing the knife, snug in its homemade sheath and also for holding the box of chalks.

I left home, keeping the noise of my departure as quiet as possible in that hushed time of the morning and drove into the city, parking well away from the Cathedral. I pulled my latex gloves on before hopping out of the car and wandering over to find a place where I could keep an eye on St. Pauls. I arrived around 5.30 am. and semi concealed myself in a spot which allowed a view of the Cathedral and waited. It was dark and cold where I was, waiting for the sun to rise or the Bishop to turn up. My mind raced through possible future scenarios, trying to unhinge my resolve but I thought about the need to get this book published and the necessity of finishing my Research.

Time dragged as I checked my watch again and again. I felt like a dam, with emotions and Passion piling up behind my wall. The Bishop was late. Much later than he had been a week ago.

5.40am. The Bishop arrived and after parking his car, got out and locked it. As he turned to walk toward the Cathedral, I pulled my hood well forward over my head and got up to follow him in the dark. I kept to the shadows, making the CCTV cameras work for their images. The sounds of the City were hushed as only early Sunday morning allowed, but small sounds were amplified in the resonating winter chill. I was careful to step quietly in my new runners and by the time the Bishop was opening the rear door of the Cathedral, I was pretty close behind him.

He entered the building and left the door to lock on its automatic closure. I made it to the door before it shut and pushed it open with my forearm, enough to slip inside and let it click shut behind me.

It was nearly time.

I drew my hood well forward to further shadow my face and grasping the wrists of the latex gloves, pulled them tight, wriggling my fingers right into the tips of them.

I became the Researcher.

At the end of the short passage, a room gave light out onto the corridor and it was here that the Bishop would be sacrificed to Research. I stole down the passage, new runners making no sound and carefully peered around the door jamb. It was a private office. The Bishop had already removed his jacket and in his shirtsleeves, stood in front of an open wardrobe which contained his collection of God clothes.

It was time, something which I didn't have much of and it was running out. I drew the knife from its sheath and holding it down beside my right leg, crept toward the Bishop. I stopped two paces behind him and whispered,

"God bless you Father."

He started and fair whipped around for his size, glaring at me.

"Who in the name of the Christ, are you?" The Bishop thundered in his best pulpit voice. The one which caused sinners to quake in their boots.

Less Passionate beings may have wilted or crumpled in the face of that withering blast but, safe beneath my hood, the Mad Monk smiled a cruel and lazy grin.

"Someone in need of your blessing Father, for I have sinned." I said as I took a step closer to him.

To give him his due, he stood firm, gazing at my semi-concealed face as he wondered how to handle the situation. Eventually, his years of training took over.

"Kneel before me my son," he responded, placing his right hand on my head as I knelt on one knee. The right I think. I looked up just as he closed his eyes.

Perfect.

With my left hand, I trapped his right on my head as I surged to my feet, the knife point rising faster than me. He didn't move quickly enough and the knife travelled faster.

It was Passion, pure Passion.

It would have registered high on a Passion-per-second meter.

The sharpened point of the knife entered his clothing above the bulge of his belly in the centre of his body, travelling in an upward direction. As the blade cut its way in effortlessly, the slightly gritty sensation of an iron blade cutting through flesh gave me a tingle of immense satisfaction.

Time slowed down as I watched that blade penetrate in slow motion. I had time to watch the Bishop's face as the iron bit. In real time it would all have been over in a second or two but I had enough expanded time to experience the moment fully.

One could say that the Bishop died instantly but he didn't. His knees buckled as his mouth worked silently. I followed him down, keeping the knife buried to its hilt in Bishop. He crashed sideways to the floor and rolled onto his back. His mouth moved one last time as his eyes fixed on nothing.

A silent question. Why?

How come so many victims ask that question?

Why?

Because you're here.

The Bishop's soul fled. (Did you like that bit?) I checked his pulse. None. I withdrew the knife and only a bit of blood leaked out of the small thin wound. Great shot, straight into the heart. Not bad for an amateur.

Excellent, it was time.

I wiped the knife blade clean on his clothes and sheathed it before returning it to my hoody pocket. I drew out the chalk and bending over,

drew a rough pentacle around the Bishop's body. I then scrawled 'the Devil Rules!' onto the wall behind the desk which he lay in front of. I fished my little camera out. Click, click and click again. Looking at my watch I realised that the support crew would be arriving shortly and it was time to leave. I locked the Bishop's office behind me as I calmly walked out.

I liked the knife I had found and remodelled. It made me feel good, and strong. It was the same sort of feeling as the pipe had given me. Direct death, not a lingering theft. More a plunder. Taking forcefully that which wasn't mine to take.

Pontius Pirate.

I was getting charged up. The organ grinder and Smokey arrived just as I drifted into the shadows. They didn't see me though and I waited until they had entered the Cathedral before finally walking away. I had more Research to do. So far I had enjoyed the day's Research immensely.

October.

I parked in an out of the way side street and walked the back way up into Kings Cross, using smaller roads that didn't appear to have CCTV cameras installed. I arrived at the church just after Mass had started but slipped into the small building anyway. I could hear sirens off in the distance. It wasn't far from here to Saint Pauls as the crow flies. I guessed the Bishop had been found.

Mass dragged on, I just played Simon Says again and followed everyone's lead. I ate the biscuit and had a sip of the watered down wine, cheapskates.

Eventually the formulaic ritual drew to a close.

I received a few odd looks as the generally older people of the congregation filed past on their way out. Whether it was because I had my hood up and pulled well forward or whether it was because I was younger, I would never know.

The religious business over for another Sunday, their souls protected for the week to come, the congregation wandered out until I was the only one left sitting in the back row of pews. I got up and checked outside the church before coming back in. That was it until the service a bit later on. No witnesses.

The priest looked up as I re-entered the church. Suspicion lurked in his voice as he asked me what I wanted. This priest did not have a Christian attitude but what could I expect with all the weirdos around this neighbourhood.

As I walked toward him, hands in the pocket of my hoody, I mumbled something about Benediction. Isn't that where you get a priest's hand placed on your head? That's what the Bishop did. The priest stood before

the alter looking imperious and a little suspicious. I didn't like him and was glad he was going to succumb to Research.

The knife handle felt reassuring in my gloved hand. I held the sheath in the other gloved hand and pulled it off the blade as I approached the skinny priest, my hands still concealed in the hoody pocket. I came to stand before him and knelt slowly on one bended knee. He reached out his hand to the top of my head and I grasped the moment. Trapping his hand like I did with the Bishop, I lunged upward with the knife. He must have glimpsed it at the last moment and tried to duck his mid section back out of the way. It was an unfortunate evasion, as it caused the end of the blade to hit his sternum and slide up. The sharp steel skidded along the bone, cutting his God uniform, the skin and flesh underneath and exposing the white bone of his sternum. Blood sprayed and he howled, pushing me away as he whirled around to run in search of some sanctuary.

I couldn't let him get away and chased after, slashing and stabbing wherever I could reach with the knife. Mostly his back I remember. Passion held me tightly in its embrace, among other things. I remember blood pumping from the hairline at the back of his neck and his torn and tattered black uniform, flapping around with his ever decreasing movements. He fought well but the Passion of his Christ did not match the Passion of my Research. Slowly, my continued stabbing and cutting worked and he eventually became still. I knew he had died when the blood stopped flowing.

We had made quite a bit of noise, as well as a lot of mess. Would someone come?

The Hell with it. I want publicity. This book will be published.

I wiped the knife on a clean scrap of his clothing before resheathing it. Then lifting his bloody, tattered body from the congealing dark pool on the floor, I carried it to the alter, pushing all the metalware to one side before placing the limp bloody mess on top. No better gift could I offer his God than the soul of a faithful believer.

Would God take those Priests who played with little boys though?

Time was marching on. I chalked a pentacle around the alter before writing 'the Devil Rules' on a convenient wall. I finished my work and thoroughly wiped my gloved hands on a clean spot on the priest's God clothes before pulling out my camera and click, click, click and click. When I inspected myself after I had finished my Research, I was so sure I would be discovered. I was horrified to find I was covered in blood, nearly the classic head to toe. So was a lot of the floor in front of the alter and along the aisle where I had chased him, stabbing and cutting.

Camouflage was needed so I went looking for some.

In a back room I discovered the priest's clothes and lifting his jacket off a hook, I tried it on. It fitted quite well. I used the inside of the lower part to

wipe my face before pulling my bloody hood forward. I only needed to make it as far as the car. I had already wiped the knife down and resheathed it so all that was necessary was for me to walk out of the church.

The whole Passionate episode had only taken about twenty minutes and the street was deserted when I came out of the church at about nine o'clock. The next prayer session wasn't until ten and Kings Cross at nine o'clock on a Sunday morning is still recovering from the night before, as the last pleasure seekers wearily head for home.

This morning, I had parked the car down the hill from the Cross and walked up. There would be some shots of me on the cameras but no shots of the car hopefully. I saw few people as I walked down to where I had parked and most of them seemed drunk or drugged, taking no notice of the blood on my hood. The hood's dark colour may have helped. Still, I kept it pulled well forward to hide my face.

The Mad Monk.

When I reached the car, I made a quick check of the surrounding area before opening the door and getting in. I started the car up and pulling my hood back and fastening my seat belt, I left. I had been extremely lucky. Somewhere a God of Authors was watching.

Maybe he knew Diana the Huntress.

The track pants and shoes, plus the hoody and the priest's jacket are now in two black plastic garbage bags. One inside the other, sitting in the bottom of a dumpster. Dumpsters make evidence disposal so easy!

I got lucky with the priest's jacket as his wallet was in the inside pocket.

God was generous and I am three hundred dollars richer.

The Lord be Praised!

So there you have it. I have now Researched ten murders and only have two to go. I liked the knife best until it all went wrong, and then it was messy. I still think I prefer the pipe.

That's it for the moment, I have to go and scrub under my nails before I go for a drive, dump the jeans I was wearing then head over to my lady's place. If she comments on the really clean interior of the car, I will just say that it was getting a bit grubby.

Sunday, ah, Sunday. The day of rest. Guess I blew that away.

Barbara was happy to see me. That girl has an unrestrained attitude to sex and an enthusiasm I have no previous experience of. Don't get me wrong, this is not a complaint. Suffice to say, it was later in the afternoon before we were nearly ready to go out. It was strange lying with her, cradled in the cradle of life, not four hours on from sending a priest to his maker. Spiritual almost, my genes happy at my attempt to create life while my brain was empowered by ending a couple of

them. What a paradox. Go figure. We decided to take in a meal and a movie so we drove up to Chatswood. It was a bit further than the City but it would be easier to park. Besides, I didn't want to go anywhere near the City again today.

I can't remember what we ate, I was a little preoccupied but the movie was excellent. One of those foreign jobs, 'Pan's Labyrinth'. It suited my mood being sudden and a bit horrific at the same time. The shootings were realistic.

Shooting, mmm.....

I dropped Barbara off at her place and headed home. I was quite tired and needed a good night's sleep. Barbara was most understanding. In fact, overall, she is just the nicest person I have ever met. Yeah, I know, nice is a nothing word but it is a generic, all encompassing, description which everyone knows. Nice.

I arrived home in time for the ten o'clock news. All day I had resisted tuning in but now I couldn't fight the urge anymore. On went the television. It was the lead item, first the Cathedral then the church in the Cross. The images were of the outside of the buildings apart from a quick peek inside the bloodstained church. The priest's body had been removed from the alter but there was still a team of police working there. The pentacles I drew at the death scenes had thrown everyone for six and all sorts of know-it-alls were being interviewed about the murders. Apparently the Pope was not happy that someone had taken out a Bishop. Check. My soul was now damned by God's chief representative on Earth.

I wonder if this Pope bought his position or blackmailed his way into it? There was mention of a mysterious hooded figure and some grainy black and white images of me in the dark, heading for the Cathedral. I breathed a sigh of relief. It was, however, short lived as the next images showed me inside the church at King's Cross in living colour. They cut the recording before it progressed as far as dead colour when I chased the priest around. My hood hadn't slipped as far as I knew, so there was no reason for me to worry. Was there?

The next shot caused me concern. It was taken by someone who had set up a security camera pointing at the front of his property. Unfortunately it also encompassed part of the street outside. One that I had used to walk back to my car. There I went, hood up and wearing the priests jacket over my bloody hood. I sure hoped no one recognised the way I walked. If they did, the door would burst in and I would be roughly escorted away. Still, this country had no death sentence and if I played my cards right, I could be found nuts.

As if I am.

I watched avidly as the experts came and went. Finally, there it was! A passing mention of a possible relationship with the Church of the Hanging Christ murders.

Yes!

I am off to bed a happy camper.

Goodnight Tania Torqs. Sweet dreams.

Pixels at the bottom of the garden.

Chapter 13.

2nd July. Monday.

I'm sweating heavily and shaking a bit. The enormity of what I have accomplished hit home this morning when I awoke from a troubled sleep. Don't get me wrong, I am not feeling guilty or anything it was just the dreams I had during the night. No, not a vengeful God sending me visions, more the fear of being apprehended by the long arm of the law. My appearance on closed circuit television, a number of times, has fuelled thoughts of capture. I dream of being chased through back streets by blue clad ghouls with capsicum spray and guns. All of them wearing ski masks with empty eye holes. My mind is running away faster than I can. I thought of taking a 'sickie' but as I have never taken a sickie in ten years on the job, it would be a change of behaviour. I've seen the television cop shows, a change of behaviour is how some of the guilty are found out so I will just have to grimace and bear it.

I slid in and out of work this morning as quickly as I could but even then, Jarvis, who sorts mail, asked if I had heard about the Bishop being murdered. I replied in the affirmative as he showed me the front page of the morning paper. The person who wrote the headlines just couldn't resist it.

'BISHOP NAILED AND PRIEST FOUND DEAD AT THE CROSS' screamed the headline.

I escaped with my first delivery of mail. It was a relief to ride the footpaths and fall into rote. I wanted to leave my brain at home but couldn't. Reckoned I might have some use for native cunning.

Everything was fine until lunchtime. Should I sit with Barbara or not? She was a pretty observant person and although we had spent time together yesterday after the event, that was yesterday. A night of dreams had given me the willies and I was definitely flighty today. As I entered the lunchroom I heard a radio that someone was listening to. The topic was the previous day's killings. I figured I was going to hear a lot more about it, so gritting my teeth I sat down on my own. Barbara came in a few moments later and sat beside me, her thigh pressed up against mine. My body couldn't help reacting to her presence and she smiled as I adjusted my position to accommodate it.

"You all right Reece?" she asked, concern in her voice.

"Yeah, I think I am suffering from a lack of sleep," was my reply. "I feel a bit strung out."

She grinned and in a low voice murmured.

"We'll have to cut down on the sex then."

She laughed at my startled look.

"Just kidding Reece."

We ate companionably in silence, content to sit with our thighs pressed against each other. I love the way she says my name. So unlike anyone else. I think it is the sibilant ending she puts on it.

I decided to try a little untruth. Alright, I lied. I am not proud of lying to the woman I love and meant to start out the way I wanted to continue but I couldn't. This is how the truthful conversation would go.

"I just killed a Bishop and a priest and am now feeling anxiety at the prospect of being caught by the police so I would like to spend the next few nights alone at home."

Yeah right. The words 'lead' and 'balloon' come to mind. I would be in the can quick smart.

Maybe.

I am not positive, as Barbara definitely makes up her own mind. That is one of the attractions about her, but with an opening line like that the chances are pretty good that she'd shop me.

So. I lied. Wouldn't you?

"Barbara, I don't know how to put this but I have hit a creative streak in my writing and would like a few nights at home to get down as much as possible while I am on a roll."

What? It was partly true.

She regarded me silently for a moment, considering.

"Probably a good idea Reece, the moon is coming up to full soon and I will end up keeping you awake with my need to prowl. It will do us both good to have the next two or three days apart. You could catch up on your sleep while I wander.

Maybe I could borrow another book; I quite enjoyed the last one."

There, you see how easy that was. I have a few nights to pull myself together now and if the police don't pick me up, I can relax.

2nd July. Monday night.

After work, I turned the television on as soon as I got home. There were news bulletins concerning the murders but not much new information. The 5.00 pm. news program ran the slayings as a lead story but didn't offer anything new. The 6.00 pm. news was more informative and let out that the police force was mounting a huge manhunt, although no one had any idea who they were hunting. It was presumed the killer was male although investigators were unable to tell from the CCTV footage if that were so. Some investigators suggested the ferocity of the attack pointed to a male being responsible.

Fools. Although to be fair, they hadn't met my mother. Women can be just as, if not more, ferocious than men. Ask any battered husband. Yes, they do exist.

A study of violent marriages in the U.K. involving the husband being bashed, put the figure at about 12% of the total.

Don't you just love experts? (X-unknown, spurt- a drip under pressure).

I was a little more relieved than I had a right to be. Maybe the police were being secretive so as not to give too much away. Once again they fell back onto the 'cult killing' mantra. Right at this moment they might be gathering outside my house.

Sorry. I have to go and look.

I'm back, time for sedation.

My grass is running out, I only have a little left. Never mind, there is always valium. In fact, I might take one before work tomorrow to help me chill out. I feel better now. I have been writing for a while and it is flowing more easily, which means that technically, I didn't lie to Barbara. That makes me feel a lot better.

What a relief.

My work is not finished, although I am well ahead of my timetable. I vowed to commit twelve murders although I think it would be prudent to wait for quite a while before I carry out any more Research. One of the things I have noted in various fictional television programmes is that overconfidence leads to mistakes. For all my derision, the police are not stupid. There are many competent and dedicated police officers out there who risk their lives to keep the masses of humanity safe from some very dangerous people. I don't consider myself dangerous, although the Clarkes were probably innocent victims of Research. By dangerous, I mean criminals who commit crimes for personal gain with complete disregard for the pain they cause innocent victims.

The Clarkes felt no pain.

Their life just ended a bit sooner than it would have. Who knows, their ending may have been preordained. I mean, if I hadn't killed them, they may have had a fatal car crash the next day.

Crocodile Killer, although Passion is eroding the heartlessness I must maintain to be reptilian.

I have fed well though and feel sated. I don't need to eat again for a long time. It would be sensible to let the ruckus die down before I venture out into the murky waters to feed anew. If I haven't been captured within a week, there is a chance that I will get away with it. It is the waiting that will get to me.

A valium a day keeps the shaking at bay.

3rd July. Tuesday.

I feel like shit today. Despite the grass, I didn't sleep very well. My dreams are weird. I am being pursued through the night. I think I preferred Rage to Passion. Rage is so impersonal. It is everyone's fault but your own. With Rage, the blame can be laid all over the place and none of it is yours. On the other hand, Passion involves emotion and that can be personal. Research is Research, although the latest Research was committed with Passion, a result of my first really intimate relationship. Something has changed. Things that were once important to me are no longer so important. What has Barbara unwittingly done to me?

Unwittingly?

Don't go there; take it for what it appears to be. Love.

I got up tired after a sleepless night spent tossing and turning as I ran from my dreams. I had to make myself eat breakfast. I shaved carefully with a shaking hand and took a valium with my morning coffee. It relaxed me so I took a couple to work with me. Today was the first day I have ever fallen off my bike. Letters spilt out of the basket clamped to the handlebars and flew everywhere. It took me ages to pick them up and sort them all out. I grazed my elbow but not seriously. How did it happen you ask? I was distracted. Blame the valium. I rode into a rubbish bin. Luckily I was barely moving. The bike is fine but I am chagrined. The accident occurred just before lunch so I was late meeting Barbara. She understood but I have a feeling she knows something is going on. I will have to be careful.

I remembered to bring in a book for her, 'Long Teeth Bite Deep'. Bit of a joke really as the story is about vampires who rule the night, just like Barbara over the next few days.

Full moon tonight. Barbara told me. I guess she will be pacing around her apartment or prowling the streets or maybe my writing will be cathartic for her. I started to think it was a bit weird for her to get active at night in concert with the moon phases but I am the one with the scars on my body who is doing Research.

Who am I to call a pot black?

The television is my main source of information regarding the 'Catholic Killings' as they have been dubbed, although I did buy all of the daily newspapers from different newsagents today. I went through them but the information they have is a reiteration of yesterday's television. Their main interest lies in comment and supposition, something that Tania likes having scanned into her innards. I scan them in as OCD or document recognition files so she can read them.

Not much new has emerged. Footprints in the blood allowed a match to a common trainer stocked by a number of stores. Ten thousand pairs have been sold in the previous three months which makes that line of investigation futile. Police are asking for any potential witnesses to come forward and have talked to a number of people who were at the church in Kings Cross. From the interviews, police have concluded that the attacker was male but are still unable to provide identification or even a sketch of what the perpetrator looked like.

What a relief.

4th July. Wednesday.

American Independence Day.

Whoopee.

Who needs fireworks when you've got nukes?

Let's skip the Bush jokes. Last night wasn't too bad. I popped a valium before I went to bed and it helped. I feel a little cloudy this morning though. A small price to pay for a good night's sleep. I wonder if the downside of excitement and

Passion is a touch of depression. I don't want to go there but the valium is running out and if I visit home too often, Mum might become suspicious. Work was work, a little less than pleasant due to the rain but I don't mind. Ages ago I splashed out and bought a Gortex jacket which keeps me dry and breathes so I don't sweat under the waterproofs. I wear my Day-Glo waistcoat over the top of it as per regulations so I can be seen as I ride around. I still get a little thrill when I pass Mrs Franciscus' old place. She must have had a relative, because the place was sold and the new owners, the Forests, are doing it up. The hedge is trimmed and the lawn is cut which makes the new paint job look the part. I saw Mrs. Forest once. Middle aged but trim and of no interest to me in any way. Not like Mrs Franciscus was.

My first.

Barbara looked tired but is full of energy today. She is a little scary when the moon is full, intense with a penetrating gaze. We had lunch together and made a date for the following night. I am going over for dinner and some nocturnal exercise which she said she needs. Apparently, I am her first boyfriend in a long, long time and she has no idea why she was attracted to me.

Neither have I.

With a bit of makeup on, especially with the body she has, boyfriend acquisition should present no problem to her. It must be something else.

Do I seem vulnerable?

Once more the television becomes my link with the investigation into the deaths of the Bishop and the priest. The news has gone around the world. The Pope is pissed off at having two of his religious fraternity knocked off at the same time and condemnation of the killer/s is growing.

Frighteningly so.

There is an upheaval in the community as it responds to what appears to be a string of religious murders across more than one denomination. Will church going increase in response, or decrease due to fear?

Time will tell.

Meanwhile, I think if I ever get caught it would be fatal for me. I would suffer some form of accident, maybe fall down some stairs or topple over a balcony 'while trying to escape'. Funny that, it's not fatal for Catholic priests to bum bandit young boys but retribution is not allowed. The Catholic Church just says 'Sorry'.

I penetrated those two Catholic priests properly.

Man, if this book ever gets published, I will be living in fear of retribution from all quarters.

Definitely not PC.

Hey, what happened to forgiving our sins or do you just forgive our sins when you kill us.

The Inquisition is not dead, just sleeping quietly.

Enough. Time for bed, perchance to sleep.

6th July. Friday.

Well, I survived another day at work and there is no sign of any investigation touching me. Maybe I can start relaxing a little. I am not so depressed now as small amounts of elation are breaking through the dark clouds.

In passing, I included the word 'grass' into my conversation with Barbara at lunchtime. She studied me closely for a moment then asked if I had ever tried it. I answered in the affirmative and received a flicker of a smile in return. No more, no less. She didn't commit herself one way or the other.

I wonder what she is thinking?

Chapter 14.

8th July. Sunday night.

Well, the truth will out. Not my truth silly, Barbara's small truth.

I went around to her place on Friday night after I put Tania to bed. Not having pets means I can go away and leave my house locked up, although now I tend to hide Tania in the back of a quite full closet. It would be extremely embarrassing to have my house broken into and Tania go walkabout. That would be the pits. Barbara buzzed me up and the smell of cooking wafted out of her door as she admitted me. Did I mention that Barbara is a great cook?

When we had indulged in our long kiss and a cuddle she sat me down in the lounge and went back to the kitchen after putting on some music. She has eclectic tastes in that department, well in most departments, and I found myself listening to 'Ash, Dust and Dirt' a CD of really excellent didgeridoo music. Man that guy can blow up a storm. I never realised just what a didge could do until I heard that CD of Barbara's.

More surprises were to come! As I sat relaxing, figuring Barbara would be slaving over the stove, she wandered out of the kitchen with what looked to be a large cigarette. It wasn't, it was weed.

She sat down beside me with a grin on her face.

"I scored some hydroponic for us. I'm glad you told me you smoke as I was wondering how to tell you that I do."

She fired it up and handed it to me. My lungs were more able to handle the smoke now and I took a big pull before handing it back and before long the whole thing was just ash.

I don't know where Rosaline had got her stuff from but its effect was like beer compared to the overproof rum effect of the weed that Barbara had obtained for us. The music seemed to become louder and the walls started to waver slightly. Colours became super bright and I started salivating at the smell of food cooking. Another effect was the tingling in my groin.

I looked over at Barbara who started to giggle and before long, tears were streaming down our cheeks. I can't remember what was so funny but it doesn't matter. She got up and went into the kitchen for what seemed to be hours but it was only five minutes before she returned with two steaming plates of food. That was the best stir fry I had ever eaten up to that time. When I had finished the washing up we went immediately to bed.

Wow.

Saturday morning was slow to start as we woke late and lay entwined for ages, just talking while I traced her tattoos, especially the octopus, which really gets her going. About eleven o'clock she jumped up and dragged me into the shower to get cleaned up.

That afternoon we attended my first Rugby League game. St. George versus the Rabbitos. I had never been to a live rugby match before, tending to watch the games on the television, and it was a mind blowing. The sound was the biggest difference. Large, muscular men hitting each other hard. Committing their bodies to the fray. From where we were sitting, we could hear the thuds as their bodies

impacted and Barbara was perched on the edge of her seat but only when she was not jumping to her feet to yell obscenities.

It was different and fun. We were not even deterred by the fine drizzle that started to fall midway through the game, it just added to the ambience of the occasion. After the match, we went back to Barbara's place, picking up a couple of large pizzas on the way. She rolled some more of that killer weed up and I lost track of time.

Suffice to say, I was very relaxed on Sunday morning and my willie was a little sore. You know (at least the guys do) that dull ache of overused muscle coupled with a slightly worn feeling. Barbara was amused when I told her.

We were rapidly moving into couple status and I was starting to feel bad about keeping secrets but what could I do? To tell or not to tell, that is the question.

We went into the city and took a ferry ride to Manly.

The weather was crap, with lumpy seas, squalls and a cold wind but it didn't matter, we sat out on the front of the ferry in our waterproof coats, laughing, as the odd wave splashed over us. Eventually we were asked to move inside for safety reasons. The trip back on the same ferry was better, as the wind was behind us and we could sit out on the front deck all the way.

Jees it was cold.

I suppose this entire chapter comes across as an attempt to fill pages but it isn't. I am trying to illustrate how Barbara and I were becoming closer as the days wore on. Close is such a poor word.

We are becoming intertwined. She has found and enjoys something special in me as much as I enjoy something in her. Tendrils of our being are growing into the other. Scary stuff but addictive.

We are destined to be together but how do I clear the air and tell her of my exploits? I really cannot at the moment. Without fracturing what we have found together. I really don't want to write Romance but this small glitch in our relationship needs to be aired.

Barbara gave me half of her grass before I left and hinted strongly that she would like to see the inside of my house as soon as possible, claiming it would help her know me better.

Female curiosity?

She is right though.

My prevarication is starting to sound weak, even to me.

I drew a deep breath and suggested she should come over next Friday evening and I would cook her supper. That got a big smile and I nearly didn't make it out of her apartment.

Sunday, later.

I know, I am going to have to go through this whole diary and put dates on the printable version. Especially if I start an entry with the private stuff. It has become difficult to separate private moments from publishable throughout the text but I have to protect myself and try to keep my lover out of the 'Diary' itself.

The media is a long way from finished with the six, yes six, religious murders. (Slight glow of satisfaction).

The hardest thing for the police to find is the perpetrator of random murders because there is nothing to link the murderer with the victims. There is no evidential trail to follow. However, the clever use of gloves and overboots on my behalf has led to very few clues for the Detectives on the case to go on.

With the absence of any real corroboration of facts, theories abound. There are as many theories as there are experts (see previous explanation of expert). With the absence of leads, an undercurrent of speculation is welling from the lower levels of society. Muslims have been targeted for attacks and one mosque has already been set on fire due to growing concerns about the culpability of the Islamic involvement in the series of murders.

I feel sorry for the trouble I have caused the Muslim people. I didn't realise that the public could be so vicious when it was frightened. I thought that what I daubed on the walls would have been recognised as Satanism or another more militant Christian group or even someone who hated the Church. I suppose that could be made to fit Muslims.

What a lot of people tend to forget, or never knew, is that Judaism, Christianity and Islam all are rooted in the same book. That of Abraham. Effectively, that means that these three religions are related more closely to each other than to any other religion on the planet.

My God is better than yours.

The Christian response is to point out that their God is composed of three parts, each having the Power. That works out to be two more than either of the other two religions.

Bloody religion, I shouldn't have put such a slant on the killings. Never mind, too late now.

13th July. Friday.

It was Friday the thirteenth when the Papal Bull regarding the Knights Templars being declared heretics was actioned. Early in the morning, way back in 1304, the Knights Templars were rounded up and imprisoned or much worse. That is why Friday the thirteenth is the subject of so much superstition these days. Seven centuries later.

I haven't written much this week. I am attempting to keep up with events. I watch as many news and current affairs programs on the television as I can manage. In between combing the newspapers for stories that is. My collection of clippings is growing but I realise that they are incriminatory and will have to be scrapped. I must scan them all into the computer soon and get rid of the physical evidence as soon as I can, it is a dead giveaway. (Wasn't meant to be a pun.)

At the moment, the movement against Muslims is growing. There is a groundswell of public opinion against Islamic beliefs now. However, there are a few sensible voices trying to get their messages across and some of them are being heard.

What is the matter with people?

Barbara is coming over soon so I'll just get a little more down and then.....

Shit, someone is knocking on the door.

Much later, after a major problem involving Barbara has been dealt with.

Finally.

The knocking was Barbara. She was very early and she was a bit stoned. Probably just lost track of time. I just closed Tania's lid down, which puts her into hibernation, and went to answer the door.

There stood Barbara, cheeks glowing red with the cold and a lovely smile on her face.

"I got hungry. Any chance of a feed?"

She looked so fetching. I smiled and ushered her in. The heater had been on for a while and the living room was pleasantly warm. I could see her shoulders losing their hunched look as she warmed up. I took her coat and gave her a big hug before going into the hall to hang it up.

I came back into the living room and put on a CD. Nothing serious, Jimmy Nail I think. Gathering the makings, I pulled out my pipe and loaded it up. Barbara was impressed by the fact there was rum in the bottom of it. We smoked a couple of bowls then I gave her another hug, during which I heard her stomach rumble loudly.

"Okay, okay, I'll go start dinner."

She smiled lazily. "I would appreciate that. Need a hand?"

"No. I'll be fine. It's my turn anyway."

I wandered off into the kitchen leaving Barbara sitting on the lounge listening to music. As I exited the room I called over my shoulder.

"Would you like a drink?"

Hearing the affirmative, I returned moments later with a rum and coke in a long glass and handed it to her. Barbara settled back to listen to the rest of the album as I returned to the kitchen.

I settled into making a meal for us and unfortunately, due to my smoked state, the preparation totally captured my attention. So much so that over half an hour went by before I thought to top up Barbara's drink.

I went back into the lounge but she wasn't there. I figured she had gone to the toilet then realised that I hadn't shown her around the house yet. The lounge room door opened quietly as I slipped into the hallway and walked quietly up toward the toilet at the far end. The light was still on in my study so I reached in to turn it off.

That is when I saw her.

Standing in front of Tania.

Intently reading something on the screen.

My heart sank. What would I have to do to remedy this problem?
 What could I do?
 Would it be fatal?
 Could I do it?
 Would it really be Research?

I coughed quietly. Barbara straightened up and turned around in one smooth motion and levelling a steady gaze on me, uttered one word.

"Interesting."

I was stunned, gobsmacked, blown away.

Interesting!

The cascade of emotions I was feeling at that moment must have flickered across my face like a silent movie. All that was needed was the pounding piano music and the crowd would have been on its feet. However, there was just the two of us, facing each other across a small, high ceilinged study.

The centre of my therapy.

Barbara must have read me like one of my books. Not hard, if you can read between the lines. That's the blank spaces in case you didn't realise. Some people can make a lot out of nothing. Most are wrong but Barbara is always right on the money.

Her face softened and a faraway look came into her eyes as she looked at me sadly.

"Your secret is safe with me. I won't tell anyone."

Relief washed through and over me and my legs became jelly-like as her words hit home.

Safe.

The crocodile slid quietly away through some very murky waters as disbelief and relief slid through me in quick succession.

"How much have you read." I asked in a whisper.

"Enough."

Then she continued quietly.

"I'm not impressed by your deviousness but then again, there is a lot you don't know about me. In fact there is a lot that no one knows about me. I guess it is time for you to know. We are linked on a lot more levels than you realise. Let's go and eat and I will tell you my deepest secret. After I do, you will be mine for life. Do you still want to hear it?"

Hers for life. That sounded a little ominous but I was in no position to refuse and anyway; did I want to? The thought of being with Barbara for the rest of my life was thrilling, if the last few months were anything to go by.

How could I refuse?

We retired to the living room where I left her to go and rescue the meal, full of trepidation, while she loaded the pipe again and before too much time had passed, we were sitting with steaming plates, a fresh drink and a head full of smoke.

Then Barbara began her story.

14th July. Saturday morning.

I am sitting in front of Tania with Barbara beside me, typing as fast as I can. Barbara's story was mind boggling and very sad at the same time. While she was relating it last night, I was in tears at times, while at others I was outraged for her. The fact she has survived to become the beautiful person that she is, is nothing short of a miracle but let's not go there as my Research has shown me that miracles are in a realm which I have desecrated.

If you believe in a God that is.

Barbara is reading over my shoulder as I type and offering small corrections. She can also touch type but likes the way I put words together so she wanted me to ghost write her story for her.

I couldn't understand why she would take the chance of putting it all down but as she said, we are linked forever now. I let Barbara read all of my writing about my Research and the bits in between. It really is a window into my soul, one which illustrates my feelings and emotions. She told me she was touched by the way I dealt with our relationship and the sympathy I showed toward her in my writing. Barbara now wholly understands my desire to get this book published and wants some background to her part in the story. As she said.

"If your book is a success, we could do a follow-up. 'I Married a Serial Killer'. It will give those precious editors something more to chew on. If I can help you realise your dreams my love, it will be well worth it."

One more thing, Barbara wanted me to tell her story in the first person like the rest of the book. I will give it my best shot.

So.

Barbara's Story.

I was born in Tamworth in 1976 when Tamworth was still a large country town. The city was nestled against the range to the north and spread down to sprawl across the river. Really, it was one high-guttered main street that used to close lunch time Saturday and reopen on Monday morning. My Mother told me that the pace of life was relaxed and slow then. That was in the days before the city became the Country Music Capital of Australia and MacDonalds came to town. In those days, Tamworth was the major centre for entertainment for many miles around and on Saturday night there was always something going on.

To the north, about a hundred kilometres away, up on the Tableland proper lies Armidale but most of the young people who worked on farms and properties all across the countryside didn't feel as comfortable in a University town, with its restrained intelligencia, as they did in Tamworth. Tamworth was more working class, salt of the earth, hot car laps on Saturday afternoon than Armidale ever could be and Saturday nights were fun.

Tamworth also marked the base of the steep upward climb to the higher tableland where chilly Armidale lay, a long ever ascending valley with the two lane main highway grinding its curving path up the Moombi's. Okay if you could get a run up but a lot of times there would be a huge truck crawling along,

sometimes with a driver wishing he had an even lower gear. There was no really safe place to overtake on that climb and often cars and trucks would boil on the way up, pulling over at the top to cool down.

It was good business for the local garages.

I remember times before I went to school, odd snippets of recollection.

Driving along the road to the base of the Moombi's past all the irrigated lucerne farms, the range on the left rising from the road and the open land to the right, disappearing in rolling waves into the far distance.

Going to a swimming hole with my Mum and Dad. I was an only child. No brothers or sisters to steal the limelight and I guess I was a little spoiled but not so you would notice.

Time at home with Mum while Dad was away driving trucks. Sometimes he would be gone for a week or more if he had a long run to do and Mum would fill the time with television in the evenings. I don't know how she felt about it as she never said.

I also remember arguments but never when I was around.

Always after I had gone to bed.

As I became older I realised they were about Dad's drinking. Mum didn't agree with the amount of alcohol he used to get through. His argument was that it kept him sane, something that may have a bearing later.

School was a whole different experience. At first it was strange, I had never mixed much with other kids and missed my Mum every day. I was teased a little at first but after I smacked another little kid in the mouth and split his lip they tended to be a little careful around me. There was hell to pay for that and Mum was called to the school to take me home. Dad talked to me about it a few days later when he got home. He wasn't mad, he wasn't that sort of man, he was patient and asked me to tell him all that was going on. I sat on his knee while he drank his stubby and related the story of school to him. No judgement, just a few words of advice and encouragement were enough for me to see there was a different path I could take. In his own inebriated way, my Father was a caring and gentle man.

I loved him so much.

Sport was a revelation. My body was developing fast. No puppy fat for me, just lithe and muscular development. British Bulldogs in the playground at lunchtimes, boys and those girls like me who liked to rough and tumble. I made friends amongst my peer group and school became a fun place. My grades improved as I discovered what it was to learn and this earned me praise at home. Dad was still away a lot but as I used to overhear, the money was good and our house was being paid off rapidly. Soon, Dad could get a job closer to home and not have to go away so much.

Birthdays came and went as did Christmases. I wasn't spoilt but always received quality presents. Dad's parents lived in Perth so we rarely saw them but they always sent a little money for me. Mum had been brought up in foster care.

Occasionally we saw her foster parents but they were busy fostering more kids. For some people it is a way of life. Foster Grandparent didn't have the same ring to it as Grandpa and Grandma and the bond was different I suppose, so we only saw them rarely if Mum made the effort to go and visit.

I scored a bike when I was ten and that gave me more freedom to explore and I suppose, get into mischief. Nothing really bad. Just the odd stone through a window of an abandoned building or ringing a doorbell and peddling away as fast as my little legs would go. The usual kids stuff. Occasionally I would get caught and Dad would sit me down and mention words like responsibility and disappointment. It hurt. I never realised my actions would disappoint Dad.

All that came to an end when I reached eleven years of age.

Nobody knew how the accident happened although Dad's blood alcohol level was way high. I reckon it was always way high and didn't contribute at all but the authorities knew best.

It was terrible.

Dad was on his way back home with a load of cattle he'd picked up to bring to the local sales. On the way down the Moombi's his truck missed a bend and went straight over the edge. The cab must have hit first and umpteen tons of beef in the trailer had squashed it flat before splitting the steel as if it were a watermelon. The funeral had to take place with a closed casket before Dad was cremated. His ashes came home with us.

For me, it was a huge loss. My steadying hand, my caring altruistic Father whose advice had saved me on many occasions, was gone. It left a huge hole in my young life but youth has a way of coping. My Father had only been around for a few days a week and I had become used to doing things on my own so I just kept doing them. Okay, I got into trouble more but people were kind and understanding, the whole town knew about the crash so it wasn't like a secret or anything. I think that support and tolerance, the sort of thing that used to be found in smaller towns, saved me from going off the rails.

Mum was devastated. She cried and cried. Inconsolable. Not just because of her loss she told me sometimes when I asked what was wrong, but also because she regretted all the times she had harangued my Father for being who he was. He wasn't a violent drunk, he never beat up on her, in fact he was just wonderful but he had to drink. She could never understand it and it drove her to distraction, always having boxes of empty beer bottles around.

She felt guilty.

Time passed. I was a member of the school hockey team and swam well. Soon it was time for High School and I went back to being a small fish in a big new pond. Boys started to act differently as I developed and I got teased but in the nicest possible way. I guess it was flirting, the way boys going into puberty do. I started to be aware of my appearance and my hemline went up a bit to show off my legs. I was noticed. I've always looked after my body.

Mum had settled down a bit. The house was paid for so it wasn't too much of a struggle for her to support us and life went on. That was until I was about thirteen.

I came home from school early one day and there was a strange, flash car in the driveway. It belonged to Dave.

Dave, how do I begin to explain Dave? Mum and Dave were sitting together on the couch when I walked in. They must have heard me because Dave was wiping his mouth with the back of his hand and Mum looked a little flushed and guilty. I

knew there was something going on. Strangely that didn't bother me but the secrecy did. Why hadn't Mum mentioned Dave to me?

He was good looking. Younger than Mum, with a cheeky boyish grin, blue eyes and styled blond hair. He smelt good too. I took an instant dislike to him. Not because he was a possible father replacement, I wasn't that stupid but there was something else. Something about his eyes.

We were introduced. Mum referred to him as her 'friend'. Apparently they had met a few months ago when he had helped Mum carry her groceries to the car at the supermarket. He hadn't been in town that long and he had asked Mum if she would like to share a coffee. They had been seeing each other since. Mum hadn't mentioned it in case I was upset but I assured her that I wasn't and Dad had been dead for a couple of years now. Life has to go on. She was relieved at my reaction and from that moment on, Mum and Dave spent more and more time together. She even went out at nights. First to simple things like the RSL then as it became more serious, she took to staying out all night.

I guess she was only human after all. One thing I have to give her though was the answer to my query as to why she stayed out all night. Apparently it was so that I wouldn't have to hear their nocturnal dalliances.

Dave was in Real Estate or something like that, and made a good living.

I still didn't like him, or the way he looked at me.

The announcement of the wedding took me by surprise. I suppose, in retrospect, I should have seen it coming but I didn't. It was quite a pleasant wedding as weddings go with lots of family friends attending. Strangely, there were very few people on Dave's side. Mostly work mates and acquaintances. I must have been the only person to notice it though as everyone seemed to be full of bonhomie and the free liquor.

Mum glowed. I'd seen photographs of her wedding to Dad and this was a lot larger affair. Good on her. She had recovered from her trauma and gone out to rebuild her life. She deserved everything that came her way.

No she didn't.

Dave moved in with us. It was easy. We had a house that we owned and he didn't. It was strange at first, making room for someone in our house. A house that used to have Dad in it. There were shadows of Dad everywhere. I used to believe, after the crash that killed him; he used to visit to keep an eye on me. It took a while but over the ensuing months Dave managed to slide into the place and displace the memories. He was funny and entertaining and my Mum thrived on his attention. To see her so happy made me happy but there was still that little prickle now and again that ran up and down my spine when I looked at Dave.

I was fifteen and blossoming. Puberty had come and gone and I was starting to think more like a woman. The boys at school must have realised the change because the teasing died off and I started to receive those lingering, lustful looks from the older boys. I knew what was going on but resisted the urges that were in my body and refused to play that game. It was all fun and exploration, double

entendre and arched eyebrows, kittenish glances and licked lips, innocent but not.

Not, as it turned out.

Mum had been feeling off colour and had gone to the Doctors. She turned out to have a cystic ovary and the medicos were worried that it might be cancerous so she was booked into the Tamworth Base Hospital for an exploratory operation. The first night she was away I arrived home to find Dave already there. A bit unusual but he explained he had come home early to get tea ready. There was something furtive about him but I couldn't put a finger on it. In my innocence I just thought he was worried about Mum or something. The evening passed as normal, I did my homework, watched a bit of telly then went to bed.

I woke to feel a knife point pressed against my throat with Dave on the other end of it.

"If you make a sound I will cut your face up," he hissed.

He was prepared. Some old panty hose was enough to tie me spreadeagled to the bed even though I fought him. He cuffed me a couple of times to subdue me although I was raging inside. Why hadn't I seen this coming? I'd had enough clues. Innocence has its own price I suppose.

Dave was evil. Underneath that handsome boyish exterior lurked a beast and what he did to me after I was tied up confirmed that. I won't go into details although the prurient interest types would enjoy that. It is not my intention to feed the flames of some other would be paedophile rapist. Suffice to say I was left bleeding and sobbing after he had his way with me. It was the chilling way he finished with me that really made me fear him.

"If you tell a living soul of this, I will hurt you so bad you will never be the same again".

I wouldn't be anyway but the next sentence out of his mouth was a sentence of another kind for me.

"If you tell your Mother, it will destroy her happiness and it will be your fault. I will blame you for leading me on and your relationship with her will never be the same again. Now get cleaned up and wash the sheets. This never happened".

With that, he left the room.

I was traumatised and withdrew. Mum couldn't understand the change in me when she came home from hospital and tried to jolly me up. It was no good, I was fucked. In every sense of the word. The news wasn't all that good on Mum's side either. Her ovary was cancerous and had been removed. They thought it was contained as there was no evidence of any metastases anywhere. Everyone was relieved.

Except me.

Dave fussed over Mum like a dutiful husband and virtually ignored me but I put a lock on my bedroom door and it remained locked every night I was in that house. I couldn't stay there long and as soon as I could I applied to be a trainee nurse at the Base Hospital. I think I just got in before it became a Uni course or something. Having a small income meant I could move out of the house and live in a flat with a few of the other trainees. It was a relief to be away from home and

I only went back to visit Mum when I knew Dave would be out. If I saw his car in the driveway I just wouldn't bother going up to the house.

My relationship with other males was now crap. Every one was a potential rapist and I couldn't relax around them. Always on the lookout for odd behaviour or misinterpreting the odd lustful glance as danger.

I guess I was pretty messed up around then.

The other girls just thought I was a swot, burying my nose in books, reading ahead on all my lessons while they went out to have a good time. I couldn't help hearing about their sexual exploits and I guess it helped to hear how normal girls my age carried on but inside I burned with shame.

This isn't meant to be a sob story, rather a recounting of a life but around that time it was discovered that Mum's ovary wasn't the only place the cancer had dwelt. It took a couple of years to get large enough to affect her systemically and by the time it was diagnosed, it was too late to do anything. I cried and cried at the funeral and avoided Dave like the plague.

Luckily Mum had made a Will and left me half the house. What used to be my family home was now half owned by a man I hated with a vengeance. Through lawyers I demanded Dave buy my share from me and to give him his due, he paid me more than market value. It made my bank account healthy.

This would be useful in the future.

Now, I don't consider myself a horrible person but because of Dave, I could not have a normal relationship with a guy. Oh, I tried dating but as soon as a mouth came seeking mine or a hand went wandering, I freaked, remembering Dave's attack. It gained me an undeserved reputation. I was lost in that department until one night I had a dream. Dad came to me. His soft hazel eyes full of love and kindness, just as I remembered but his dream words sobered me.

"That man has done you a great wrong and if I were alive, I would kill him. Alas, I am not but you have to rid your life of him or you will never be free."

"But Dad, it is wrong to kill. You always taught me that."

"Think of him as a rat," the dream voice continued, "and exterminate him before he damages another human being."

I woke up, in the middle of the night with that dream replaying over and over and made my resolve. No longer would I be a victim, Mum wouldn't suffer because of what I was about to do and if I got caught, it wouldn't matter. Although I would rather remain free.

Planning. I am good at planning and I thought of all the means at my disposal.

Finally I hit on a solution.

Suxamethonium chloride.

What you might ask is suxamethonium chloride? Simple. It is a depolarising muscle relaxant sometimes given at the beginning of an operation, under anaesthetic, to paralyse the muscles of the body. It can cause pain and spasms and is not used often or commonly but that doesn't matter.

I worked in a hospital.

Over the next few days I Researched all I could find out about the drug. Not hard for a good student and I then set about obtaining some. It came down to filching

partly used vials from operations and in a few months I had plenty for what I envisaged.

It took all of my resolve and nerve to contact Dave and ask if I could come around to the house and talk with him. I almost heard the wheels in his head going around as he agreed. We made plans for one evening after work. Luckily it was winter and it grew dark early.

I arrived at what used to be my family home on foot, best way to avoid detection I figured and drew breath before knocking on the front door. I had grown longer and stronger since I left home and had been pursuing martial arts for two years. No one was ever again going to do to me what Dave had done.

Dave answered the door and looked around as he ushered me in. No doubt to see if any witnesses had seen me arrive. Not much doubt what his intentions were. In my bag was a loaded twenty millilitre syringe equipped with a short, large bore needle. Best way to get a lot in of drug in over a short time without the risk of breaking the needle.

I was ushered into my old lounge and Dave tried to be chatty as we sat down, fishing for the reason for my visit. I verbally parried with him for a while before I asked for a drink. He smiled and rose to his feet, crossing to the inbuilt bar on the far side of the room. I removed the syringe from my bag and padded silently after him. It was too easy. I drove the needle into his back and managed to get ten mls into him before he could react. He swung around, aiming a fist at my head but my training kicked in and I blocked it as I tripped him. He fell and for a moment there was an open shot. I managed to get the rest of the drug into him. He screamed at me but was slow getting to his feet where he stood, slight muscular spasms occurring over his body.

"What have you done?" he asked, enunciating with difficulty.

"Just given you a healthy dose of a muscular paralysis drug." I replied.

A look of fear crossed his face in competition with the odd spasm.

"Don't worry; I am not going to hurt you. If the drug works like I hope, you will die of asphyxiation in about ten minutes."

Dave tried to move toward the telephone but his legs wouldn't support him.

Shaking, he slid to the floor, panic writ across his face with the realisation that he was no longer in control. He rolled onto his back, eyes open and his breathing slowed then stopped as his body spasmed.

"You see Dave, it's like this. You are a bastard and you took advantage of a virginal fifteen year old girl. Now she is fighting back. This is the only way I can see for me to regain my life. I know you can hear me but you can't move a muscle. How does it feel to be powerless and at someone else's mercy. Not so nice is it? Bad news. You will be dead in another four or five minutes. These are the last words you will ever hear. Fuck you asshole."

I left him to his death and straightened the place up a bit, took the second glass and washed and dried it before replacing it on the bar, wiped of prints.

I was never here.

As it turned out, Dave's death was ruled a heart attack. No post mortem was carried out and as his step daughter, his closest living relative, I inherited the house.

I sold it. I just couldn't live there.

How good to make money from the death of an evil bastard.
My life changed after that and I began to relate to boys better but I always took interest in the shy, altruistic ones. In the long run kindness wins over testosterone every time.

But that is not the point of this story. It is merely a prelude to something even more interesting and pertinent to the moment.

You see, I was relatively young, about twenty one, when I finished my nursing. I was also relatively rich and more settled with the opposite sex. I felt that I would like to give something back to the world. You got it, young and idealistic. I went through a period of trying to decide on how I would repay my humanity and settled on working in an old people's home for the terminally ill. Well, someone has to take care of the aged in their dotage and it is not the easiest or most attractive form of occupation I can think of. In fact, I take my hat off to those people, who year after year care for those who cannot care for themselves. Believe me, I did it.

That is where this story is leading.

For two years I worked diligently to alleviate suffering and improve the quality of life during the last few months or years of the dribbling, drooling, incontinent and non compos old people. They had worn their lives out and couldn't even appreciate its passing anymore.

I couldn't stand it, nor could I see the rational in keeping these husks of humanity going on and on and on.

Suffering.

Potassium in a drip line, even in small quantities, will cause a human heart to stop beating. That last roll of the heart drum can potentially stop months or even years of a vegetable existence. It gives a final dignity to what was once a human life.

So I started thinning out the worst cases.

Over time, the most degenerated and sorry excuses for what were once human beings were pruned carefully from the ranks of the nursing home. I didn't feel bad about it. I was giving release to prisoners.

Fourteen freedoms over two years, spirits soaring from earthbound husks to rejoin the great wheel. I felt good about my work but then I heard from a colleague in the know that the nursing home was under investigation for an increase in the average number of expected deaths.

We have these old folk on a time table.

Averages.

Somewhere there are bureaucrats measuring life by the expected death rate. To them it is just a numbers game. Maybe they should join up with the religious mobs who condemn euthanasia and come and work in a nursing home for the terminally ill. Put their values into practice.

I ran.

Well it was not really running. I applied for a couple of weeks holiday and came down to Sydney with the intention of keeping out of the way for a while but after consideration I realised that there may be a bit of a stink.

Money allowed me a new face, not a lot different from the old but enough and a new identity. I no longer nurse and am considered to be a serial killer although they never actually managed the correct total due to some of the bodies being cremated. I think I am officially credited with eight murders. They were not murders, nor were the deaths executions; they were acts of mercy. Trouble is, we have laws which make us torture people by keeping them alive far beyond the time they should have left this mortal coil. Reece will end his Research at twelve. My total is fifteen all up.

We are a good pair. I love Reece's softness and shyness and I can see he is not crazy but actually Researching the subject matter for his book.

In detail.

I admire that and will help him if I can.

By the way, my real name isn't Barbara.

It's Chantelle.

Chapter 15.

14th July. Saturday lunchtime.

After hearing Barbara's story last night it was quite late and I was both drained and relieved. When I saw Barbara, or should I say Chantelle (what a yummy name) standing in front of my computer last night, I didn't know what I would do. Rage and Power had started to build but I don't think I could have harmed her. There was a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach at the thought of losing everything and being incarcerated forever. Suicidal thoughts had begun to course through me as we went to sit in the lounge room but I was captivated by her story and as I listened to what she related to me, I eventually settled down.

We went to bed late and our lovemaking had a soft poignancy to it. More comfort than lust.

Writing it all down this morning has cemented my feelings about her.

Ghost writing to dispel the ghosts of the past.

A meeting of two souls with more in common than they ever realised.

I am now in the process of rereading and editing what I typed, while Chantelle, sorry, I can't use that name; while Barbara has gone to do some shopping.

We lay in bed a while this morning before getting up and discussed our future.

Barbara is adamant that I finish my Research and get the 'Diary of a Serial Killer' published. She has read two of my books and feels that I am a neglected talent.

She doesn't know what it means to me to hear someone express those sentiments after all the rejections I have received over the years.

I truly love her.

When she gets back we are going to discuss possible methods of killing for the final two items of Research. It will not be religiously themed as there is still quite enough media interest in the previous killings. I feel a bit more secure now than I did a couple of weeks ago, although I am still annoyed with myself at messing up the demise of the priest. Frenzied is a word that the media is using but there was no frenzy, just passion.

Not the Passion of the Christ, more the Passion of the Researcher.

The stabbing only continued until the priest had stopped breathing, not a moment longer. How was I to know that he was a tough old boot and would take so much punishment before he gave up and met his maker?

Actually, his mum and dad made him but I was trying to put a religious slant on the ending and make it more poetic.

I can hear the creaky board on the verandah and the key I gave Barbara turning in the lock.

Time for lunch.

Much later.

Barbara and I spent all afternoon discussing various methods of terminating the human condition. She has an inventive mind and our discussion ranged across a wide variety of methods. Barbara still detests the pushy testosterone types of males who abound in society and thought there would be a poetic justice in taking a couple of them out. She remembered a scene from a movie by the name of 'Hannibal' where the main character slashed the femoral artery of a bad guy

and he bled to death immediately. The actuality of doing something like that could be difficult but once again, Barbara came up with an idea.

I suppose I will have to change fonts and put some more words down for the book to explain her idea for one of the killings. It is very inventive and will take a lot to pull off. However, a challenge is what I need at this juncture.

The finished book will be a bit slim, but still, it's a Diary.

14th July. Saturday.

I have given much thought to the final two items of Research that need to be taken care of to complete my Diary and decided that they will both be different. I want them to be spectacular and also to serve a social function, so I am going to predate on a predator. That's right, kill a social predator. Invention is all and for my next outing I am going dressed as a woman!

No, don't laugh. I am slim and lithe with no extra body weight. My work outside has kept me fit not fat. I could easily pass for a woman with the right clothes and makeup because I don't have that 'male' face structure that is often a giveaway with some transvestites. A couple of years ago I was poking around in my garage and found a good quality, shoulder length blond wig. You know how it is, I couldn't resist trying it on in front of a mirror. The reflection worried me a bit as it edged into my maleness. You see I looked quite good in it.

The method I have chosen is to slash the femoral artery of a pestering male on the middle of a crowded dance floor. Not impossible but timing is all and I have to go in disguise as there will be cameras everywhere. If I can get away with this, I will have elevated myself above the baser levels of the grunt and bash serial killers to a place where finesse and planning is all. I will have entered the realm and mindset of criminal genius which will make my diary all that much more important as a Research report.

It will take effort. Over the next couple of weeks I will need to learn how to walk on medium height wedge heels and deport myself in a feminine manner. I will need to learn mannerisms that will make my character believable and also the feminine side of seductive behaviour.

I think some DVD's will be necessary for that. I will have to buy some.

Maybe older ones from the fifties, where a glance or gesture could convey so much intent without being over the top. An arched eyebrow is so eloquent, far more so than the present day, expose as much flesh as possible, method of attraction which is so blatant and unsubtle.

So much so that I choose not to use it.

The idea is for me to go to a nightclub and head for the dance floor where I will wait until someone starts to try and grope me. He will become my victim. Over the next two weeks I will practice various moves to do the job without getting sprayed with blood. It is important that I exit the club before people start sliding on the blood and falling down. The average

human body is about eight percent blood by body weight of which approximately half will empty quickly through a femoral artery. A brief calculation will reveal that an eighty kilogram male will lose about three and a half litres of blood in less than a minute. Now that is a lot of slipping and sliding on a packed dance floor. It will also not allow much time for a clean getaway. Push the envelope.

15th July. Sunday night.

Of course I didn't mention Barbara's input in the passage for the Diary. I'm not stupid. Her existence must be kept secret or she will become an accessory to murder.

I wouldn't like that.

In actual fact, it will be Barbara who will be my mentor in all things feminine and instruct me in deportment and mannerisms. We are similar in size, so today she went home and brought me back some of her clothes to practice in. The shoes will have to wait until she buys me a pair during the week, as our shoe sizes are different and for once my garage couldn't oblige. Used women's shoes, and there must be billions of pairs of them, probably head down a different wormhole to most other things in existence.

So, I sat back while Barbara shaved me, a strange experience as I have never been shaved by someone else before and before long I emerged from under the stubble with a smooth, smooth face. No rasp, no catch. I went out to the garage and relocated the blond wig before once again submitting to Barbara's ministrations. She applied makeup for me and when she had finished, placed the wig on my head and brushed it out. It felt good being ministered to and I can now see why women enjoy beauty parlours. I wanted to check me out in the mirror but Barbara wouldn't let me. The suspense was killing me.

Getting dressed was interesting. Bras are not that comfortable. Being squeezed around the chest all the time is a little unpleasant. I put it on however and we stuck a rolled up pair of socks in the cups for the moment. Barbara said she would buy me some falsies and a padded bra. Apparently there are jelly-like falsies available that feel like the real things. I really should have got out more; I miss out on so much. Could a woman be charged with false advertising for wearing fake breasts?

Breasts are a form of sexual advertising aren't they?

Panties. Not designed to hold male tackle in place and a slight problem. We solved it by tucking my bits as far down as possible and deciding on a looser fitting sheath type midi skirt as my scars would show in anything shorter. How any woman can get around comfortably in those things is beyond me but I have to learn. Barbara decided a long sleeve, tight top would be the best as it hid my scarred arms and camouflaged my cleavage. Before long I was dressed and Barbara led me into my bedroom with a hand over my eyes until I was standing in front of the full length mirror on my wardrobe door. She took her hand from in front of my eyes and I was amazed.

No longer Reece but something far different.

I just stood, speechless, taking in the person before me. Shoulder length blond hair, attractive and svelte with an appealing twinkle in the perfectly made up eyes. I would pass as a pretty woman anywhere. All I had to do was learn to deport myself as a woman. The shoes would be a real trial and learning to walk in them would be difficult. Still, there was no rush. I was in no hurry and this had to be perfect.

I needed a name though.

20th July. Friday night.

I have been practicing for a week now but still clomp around the place in my new shoes. I have to learn to glide before I can start to utilise some of the finer aspects of female attraction. The look is perfect and I would visually pass as a woman, even under fairly close scrutiny. The mannerisms will be more difficult to master but I have time.

Time to kill but not time to kill just yet.

The hubbub over the religious deaths is dying down, as no new leads are forthcoming and no further murders have taken place. The public is losing interest in the continued parade of experts and that is enough for advertisers to pull advertising from those media outlets which continue to flog the subject. Money rules media. Reporting is becoming a public relations exercise rather than an impartial record of events unravelling on the stage of life.

I have become more selective in what I scan into Tania as there is a large amount of newsprint devoted to my Research and not all of it is quality.

After ceremoniously burning my scrapbook in the incinerator out in the back yard, I tend only to pick the best written and researched articles now, as I no longer feel the need for recognition like I used to. I know how good my Research is and that is what is important. It's not like I am about to show my computer Scrap Book folder to anyone.

I feel more and more secure as the days pass by. Overconfidence is something I need to guard against but who would suspect little old me as a serial killer. Nobody, because I am not a serial killer really, merely a Researcher who is trying for accuracy.

Back to being a woman. Interesting. In fact, I think I like it but I don't want to go there. Shaving legs, the time spent on making up and having to choose what to wear. What a drag, it takes so long. I am content being a man. Another week or two should see me on the dance floor. I have decided a craft knife would be the best weapon, blade retracted until needed but sharp as a woman's tongue when extended.

Weapon of choice.

Guess what? I found one in my garage. You think this is all contrived but it isn't. Fate does move in mysterious ways. The one that I found is old and made of aluminium, grey, light and very solid. It fit my hand perfectly and there were bright new blades inside the handle. I polished it up until it

shone and lightly oiled the sliding parts until they slid in and out smoothly. Sexual sorts of words for something sexually undertaken.

Fitting.

I put some dance music on and practiced moving to the music in my women's clothes and new shoes. I was trying for sinuous grace and a seductive hip action. Not easy for a man to accomplish first off. The mirror is my friend in this and I use it a lot. I have to be good. Well, not good, morals have little to do with it. I have to be practiced and natural. I need to attract a predator.

I have to be prey but not-prey.

22nd July. Sunday morning.

Although I have previously mentioned a girlfriend in the Diary text, I had to write the above part for the Diary as though it is just me getting myself ready to do Research dressed as a woman. Up to now, 'the girlfriend' is not an accomplice and theoretically has no knowledge of my Research but if I write about her helping me, she becomes an accessory to murder. I know it is all a bit silly but I would rather fake a few details in the Diary to keep Barbara in the clear than have her involved, although in actual fact it is Barbara who is my mentor in all things feminine. She is doing an excellent job of it and is very supportive, although last night was a surprise and an embarrassment for me.

Barbara made me choose a woman's name. It took a while before I came up with something I was happy with. Regina. Rhymes with vagina and would act as a lure if used correctly. After I chose, she grinned wickedly in approval and gave me a present she had tucked away for this naming moment.

I now own a handbag.

A lovely little leather job with a matching purse. I think it is a Gucci knockoff but I don't have the eye to tell if it is or not. Knowing Barbara, it could be the genuine article. That wasn't the end of it though. Barbara announced we were going out. I thought it was an excellent idea until she informed me I was going as Regina. We didn't actually argue but I wasn't going to budge until she called me a chickenshit. That was the spur that drove me into my new bra with the jelly tits, a button up shirt and a pants suit. Rather fetching I thought as I gazed at myself in the mirror. We went to a pub in Balmain, pulsing with a live band and walked in together. I must admit I hesitated at the door but Barbara just linked her arm through mine and with a whispered, "Be cool", towed me through the door.

How to describe events inside after we entered? Any woman could, easily, but I wasn't a woman. Oh, I looked like one but that was the exterior, inside I was jelly. I felt eyes on us as soon as we entered.

Male eyes. Some predatory.

And female eyes, sizing up the opposition for the night.

It was weird.

I let Barbara buy the drinks as I didn't trust my voice and my mouth was dry. She ordered a couple of screwdrivers which we carried to a spot where we could observe the dance floor. The place was packed and the band was cooking. The dance floor was crowded and the place reeked of stale beer and sweat. Before

long, two fairly well dressed young men appeared, one each side of us and attempted to strike up a conversation. I now know what women mean when they talk about men conversing with their breasts. My falsies weren't large but the young man on my side kept sneaking glances at them.

I was a sex object.

I let Barbara do the talking and said little to the young man other than my name. It had the desired result and he could barely contain the resulting smile as the tiny wheels in his brain strained around and made the connection.

Barbara informed the young men that we were out together and did not require company. They wandered off, muttering about lesbians. Apparently, if two women are out together and refuse male advances, it makes them lesbians. Seems to be a large leap in reasoning but I am not experienced in this sort of thing.

I really have led a somewhat sheltered life.

I went to the bar for the next round at Barbara's urging and slowly came to realise that my disguise was not only plausible but that it was working quite successfully. I had my bum patted while I wiggled my way back to Barbara with a drink in each hand and before long I was actually enjoying myself in my new role. There is a certain sort of power in being a woman.

Hard for me to describe at the moment.

It was fun being invisible as a predator while being very visible to the males in the room. Barbara and I made it onto the dance floor and I was amazed at the number of times I 'accidentally' got bumped, fondled and ground against in the crush. To be honest, I had no idea what women go through. No wonder some of them turn into bitches. Not going there.

Well, to cut a long story short, my disguise worked perfectly and I am now more confident of being able to pull off the next round of Research.

As a curious footnote: When we arrived home, Barbara asked me to leave the makeup and wig on when we went to bed.

Her octopus writhed under my tongue.

26th July. Thursday night.

My preparations are going well. I went out to a pub to see if my disguise was working and it is. I attracted male attention and copped a few unasked for and unwanted fondles. Must mean something, unless men fondle anything female or vaguely resembling it. Come to think of it, maybe some do.

The dance floor allowed me to get close to males and I had to move away from some rather obvious pursuits. It was no problem, just a different mindset. I guess the option of punching someone is well down the list for a woman, so I worked things out in a gentler fashion.

I feel I am ready for the challenge and having already used a knife to kill, it is merely a change of action rather than a whole new ball game.

Maybe this weekend will see number eleven under my belt.

27th July. Friday night.

Barbara thinks I am ready and our practice run has given me confidence in my disguise. She bought me a mid length skirt with pockets and we adapted one of them to hold my craft knife firmly in a concealed manner. The skirt is loose enough so that the slim bulk of the knife is not visible but is easy to access. I practiced discreetly removing it, hiding it in my hand and then replacing it. Quick draw McGraw. That's me.

Barbara will be coming with me. Not into the club though, that will be my domain. She was worried about the getaway and convinced me that she should take care of the driving. I decided we should be more prepared, so tomorrow we will have a dry run, checking for convenient parking spots and looking for cameras on the streets around the club we choose. I will not spend long inside there. Just long enough to check out rear entrances and escape routes. One can never be too careful when liberty is at stake.

28th July. Late Saturday night.

After checking in the entertainment section of the Saturday newspaper, I decided on a dance venue in Pitt Street and after long preparation, drove into the city as Regina. I parked a block away from where the club was, leaving the car in a position where it could not be blocked in.

On the walk to the club, tottering along on my medium height wedge heels, I surreptitiously checked out anywhere that could hide a camera. They were getting smaller and smaller these surveillance cameras and spotting them could sometimes be difficult, although I seemed to have a knack for it. There were quite a few tucked around the place and if I wasn't careful, I could lead the visuals back to my car, camera to camera. My car would then appear to be leaving the scene shortly after the event. I would be trapped. I needed to rethink the getaway.

I had no trouble getting into the club. Although there were guys standing in a queue outside, the girls were getting in easily.

So much for no sexual discrimination in society.

Once inside, I found the noise and lights to be a little disorienting but I made my way to the bar and bought a drink which I sipped slowly while checking the place out. Before long I was down on the dance floor, mixing it with that mass of sweating bodies. There must have been a lot of people on Ecstasy, judging by the blissful but blank expressions on the faces surrounding me as we all danced to the pounding rhythm.

I went to the loo, ladies of course, and looked for rear exits and alternative ways out. They were guarded by lounging security staff who appeared disinterested but I bet they weren't. I was not prepared to find out. After another ten minutes on the dance floor, fending off a few Lotharios, I decided it was time to leave.

Exiting the club, I walked in the opposite direction to where the car was before trying to find a way back to it out of view of the cameras. It was exceedingly difficult. Almost everywhere I looked there was a lens pointing at me.

I would have to rethink the strategy.

29th July. Sunday.

When I got back to the car last night, Barbara was excitedly expectant but I shook my head as I got into the car. I sat and related the events of the past hour to her, including my fear of the cameras being our nemesis, before squeezing down in front of the front seat so I would not be seen associated with our ute as we left. I had taken a cautious half an hour to get back to it, so temporally there should be no association between it and me if anyone remembered the blond at the club. We had to rethink our escape.

Public transport was the answer. The train system. Come out of the club, walk to the nearest subway and take a train to a small suburban station. Walk a short distance until I was out of camera vision and once back at the ute change from Regina to Reece. Regina vanishes and the trail is cold.

Barbara is getting more and more excited at the prospect of me doing this but is worried about me being on my own. This bit of Research is proving most difficult to plan but it should be pretty spectacular if it goes down the way we planned. I think it is better if Barbara stays at home.

She can help on the next one.

3rd August. Friday.

Tomorrow is the day. Everything we have worked for will hopefully come together. I am becoming more nervous by the minute. You would think, after ten murders, some quite gory, that I would be quite blasé about it all by now. I am not. This one will take a precision I have not manifested to date. It is a public display of my budding prowess as a Researcher.

Not a Crocodile kill at all but a display of stealth and surprise.

5th August. Early Sunday morning.

November.

What a mess! I am covered in blood and my hands are shaking so much I can hardly type.

Barbara is looking worriedly over my shoulder as I punch the keys to learn what happened. I can't tell her first or this will be a retelling and not the original account it needs to be for realism.

I am deeply shaken and for the first time in my short career as a Researcher I am beginning to have doubts about my success. The first part of the expedition went perfectly; it was the aftermath that was the problem.

I left my car at Tempe in a deserted side street not far from the train station and took a train into the city. I was dressed as Regina and oozing

confidence as I looked down on humanity from my lofty position of Serial Killer Researcher.

In a short while we were in the city and I left the train station at Town Hall to walk down Pitt Street to the club. No problems, I even got a few whistles which boosted my confidence.

Once inside the club, I bought myself a drink which I downed pretty quickly before getting another. The alcohol calmed my nerves, which was necessary as I was shaking a bit by then. Fifteen minutes went by before I plucked up enough nerve to venture out on the dance floor by myself. I had already been approached by a couple of guys at that stage but had given them the brush off.

Out on the dance floor, handbag strap firmly on my left shoulder, I surrendered to the music and enjoyed the rhythm of the moment, relaxing further with the hypnotic, insistent beat pulsing through my body. It was then I felt a hand caress my bottom. Looking over my shoulder, I caught a glimpse of the perpetrator, dancing on his own. He winked at me while a small leer briefly lifted the corner of his mouth. Not a very prepossessing sort of person, with moussed spiky hair and a tight top above tight pants, showing off his assets. He slid closer and placed his hand on my hip.

"Want to dance with a real man, Blondie?" he said loudly enough that I could hear him above the din.

I lowered my eyes in what I hoped was a shy manner and moved away. He followed.

"Hey. Don't be like that. I only want to dance with you. What's your name?"

"Regina," I replied, loud enough for him to hear above the dance music. His face held that barely concealed grin as he made the connection.

"Hi Regina, I'm Troy."

I didn't like him. He made me feel dirty somehow.

He would do.

Once again he touched me and this time I let his hand remain on my waist for a while before spinning away again. He followed.

Conversation was well nigh impossible, so as Regina I entered the mating dance that most of us go through. Only I was playing a role and he was just being a sleaze.

Over the next fifteen minutes he got closer and closer to me, accidentally brushing my fake boobs a couple of times and handling me more and more as part of his dancing routine. The dance floor was quite crowded and the time was approaching. I manoeuvred to a position where we were side by side, facing in opposite directions with him on my right. I slid my right hand down and rubbed his right thigh, on the inside, just below his crotch. His face lit up and he nodded with enthusiasm.

"That's it Regina. You're getting into it now aren't you?"

I nodded dumbly and moved away from him, surreptitiously removing the craft knife from its concealment. The crowd on the dance floor was now so numerous, there was hardly room to move at all. I danced back beside him and bumped our right hips together as I dropped the hand holding the craft knife down and rubbed his right thigh in the same place again. His movements slowed in time to my touch.

"Beautiful Regina. You're doing great."

I smiled sweetly as I flicked the blade out and in one smooth motion, slashed upward and outward across his femoral artery. A momentary puzzled look passed across his face which was all I saw before stepping forward into the crowd and heading for the exit, snapping the blade back into the handle and tucking it away in my skirt. I heard a yell behind me but didn't look back. All I could think about was exiting the club before the shit hit the fan. I walked out without rushing and just before I cleared the club, the screams started. I would have loved to stay and watch but that was way too dangerous.

The slowish walk back up to Town Hall station was the longest walk I have had to make in a long time. I wanted to run so badly but that would have been a dead giveaway. I made it at last and just before I went down the stairs, I looked back to see the flashing lights of police cars outside the club. Close call. Before long I was standing on the platform waiting for my train. While I was stood there, I checked out my right leg and shoe. Not a speck of blood.

Also, no photographs.

Tania Torqs will not be very happy although she has digested photographs of Regina for her records.

So where did the blood come from I wrote of at the beginning?

That, dear reader, is what has shaken me more than anything I have accomplished so far.

I reached Tempe rail station without mishap and left the train to head for my car. It was still just before midnight and the place was relatively deserted. Suited me fine, or so I thought.

I was about half a block from my car, between street lights, when I passed a dark alley. Suddenly an arm wrapped around my neck from behind and I felt the point of something sharp in my back.

I froze.

A waft of alcohol passed me by as a voice growled.

"One scream and I'll kill ya. Nod yer head if you unnerstan'."

I nodded, with jelly legs barely holding me up. My attacker thought I was a girl. And why shouldn't he.

"Pretty girl like you is askin' for it walkin' around alone at night. And I'm goin' to give it to ya. One squeak an' yer dead. Rather have you alive but I can fuck you while your still hot if you want to struggle."

My attacker pulled me back into the alley. In the near dark I could just make out it was a dead end. He shoved me forward and blocked the entry, standing in silhouette, and waving a pointed steak knife at me.

A steak knife! Was this guy serious?

A fucking rapist!

Something I have never had to think of before but that was because I was a guy. I was beginning to understand a lot of shit now. In fact, I am a bit embarrassed at some of the stuff I have written about women in this Diary but it will have to stand.

We are all on a journey.

"Take yer clothes off and lay down on that bit of cardboard," he grunted as he motioned toward a tattered bit of spread-out cardboard box.

I started to comply, or appeared to as I surreptitiously removed my craft knife from its concealed place and palmed it. I looked up at him with what I hoped was a terrified look on my face, although from the way I felt, I wasn't acting. I motioned at the side of my skirt.

"My zip's stuck. Can you help me?"

He grunted and moved forward, off guard with the steak knife held low. As he came within range I trusted to luck and smoothly baring my blade, quickly swung it in an arc, gripping the craft knife tightly and powering it with pure RAGE. He didn't see it coming until the last moment and pulled his head back to avoid what he thought was a punch in the dim light. Perfect.

The scalpel sharp blade met his open throat with a vengeance and sliced across, buried to its full depth. The force of the blow must have severed his carotid artery on the left as well as his trachea and both jugular veins.

There was a phenomenal spray of blood which shot over my head and down my front. Bubbles appeared at his throat as the spray continued in rhythmic spurts. He dropped his pitiful knife and clawed at his throat.

His blood was everywhere.

My attacker stumbled around to leave the alley but crumpled in a heap before he could take a pace. His life pooled on the alley floor in front of his dimming eyes.

Bastard.

Me? Shaken and stirred. Not bothered by the kill. It wasn't Research though. There was no intent or planning, it was just a way to escape a situation. This was a freebie but in reality, I still had one to go.

I stood for a moment, gathering control of my wildly trembling legs before walking up to the mouth of the alley and taking a quick peek up and down the street. Quiet as a tomb. Risking discovery I took my little camera out of my handbag and click, click, preserved the moment for Tania. Then I stepped out and away from that alley, heading for my car.

I saw no one and don't think I was seen. Once at the car, I quickly wiped my face with the makeup removing pads that were in there and

removing my wig, put on a jacket which I zipped up. The skirt would have to stay until I made it home.

My one hope was that I wouldn't get pulled over by the police; there was no way to explain my condition or my skirt.

Obviously, I made it.

Barbara's fussing now after reading this over my shoulder as I typed. Calling me 'poor baby' and stroking my hair. I heard a couple of gasps and a groan and also a small, 'you beauty' when she read about me cutting my attacker's throat. Time for me to accept Barbara's ministrations and go and get cleaned up.

Eleven down, one more to go. No, I can't say twelve now. He was an unasked for bonus.

The Diary will have a baker's dozen in it.

Chapter 16.

5th August. Late Sunday night.

Today was clean up day. I had a long, long shower last night and thoroughly washed every inch of myself. Twice. Not a speck of blood left on me. I do hope that rapist didn't have AIDS or Hepatitis as a little splatter of his blood ended up in my mouth. It had a metallic sort of taste. No, I didn't like it. I am not a monster, merely a thorough Researcher who was caught out. How do you think he would have reacted when the panties came down? I shudder to think. Either run a mile or turn into a frenzied berserker. I couldn't chance it. I would be a lot less effective with panties around my knees.

All the clothes I wore have been double bagged, the house has been cleaned and the car has been detailed in case I have left some blood in there. I sacrificed the super cheap seat covers and will buy some more soon. No sense in leaving obvious clues, even though I don't feel as if I am a suspect in any of the murders.

I am getting a feel for the mindscape of a serial killer. The triggers are difficult and varied and seem to relate to the reward or the hunt itself. I think a lot of it is cerebral initially but the payoff is emotive.

Personally, I am a little inclined to obsessive compulsive and the planning of my Research has given me a lot of pleasure.

Especially when it all works out.

Initially I had difficulty with taking life but after the first few times, the extinguishing of life became my predatory reward. One step closer to a finished Diary and publication.

Initially, I found that women, especially those I perceived as 'types', were the target of choice. I must have been exacting revenge for the hurts inflicted on me in my earlier life. Now I view those 'types' with pity.

Products of their environment or upbringing, which in many cases causes them to be like they are. The sadness is that those 'types' accept it and have no idea that it is possible to change and become something more. I have risen above random killings now and my last piece of 'Research' will be carefully chosen.

Probably someone obnoxious.

I watched as many editions of the news as I could on the television. My deeds were both mentioned. The nightclub murder was fairly well up in the rank order and someone must have been putting in overtime on the surveillance tapes because they showed a quick clip of myself and the victim on the dance floor and a clip of me leaving the club with my head bowed. The dance floor clip was really poor quality due to the low light levels but the exiting shot was quite passable, although my face was shadowed by the blond hair of the wig. I did make a pretty girl and no

one would be able to connect me with her. Police would like to question this woman in relation to their enquiries. Yeah right.

The other death was a mere footnote to the more spectacular one, just a mention of a man found stabbed to death in Tempe. Stabbed! Give me a break. That man had the widest smile of his life plastered across his throat. Maybe the police were holding back information to help them nail the killer.

Whoever she was.

I wonder how much camera footage the police will trawl through in their effort to find the killers.

Watch this space.

6th August. Monday night.

The answer to my question about video footage has been answered.

Tonight's news carried more pictures of me as Regina, walking down Pitt Street, entering the nightclub and walking back up Pitt Street to the station. Because I am aware of the cameras, in most of the shots my face is indistinct but there must be one or two usable ones which the police will eventually find. If they haven't already done so. However, I make a damn fine woman, even if I do say so myself.

Barbara and I had a long talk this evening. She has her own key to my, sorry, our house and is spending less and less time at her flat. We are inextricably bonded now and see our bond being for life. I suggested she move in here with me and give up her flat. A suggestion that resulted in a healthy whoop of joy and Barbara leaping into my lap. I love to see her happy. Her happiness has almost become paramount to me. We will move her out on the weekend. The ute will come in handy for that task.

It will be strange at first, sharing my house with another person after I have been here alone for so long. I am not going to introduce Barabara to my parents; she is none of their business. They don't visit my home and I encourage them not to. My mother thinks it strange but I explained it to her as a need for privacy and she leaves me alone. She didn't at first but after her first abortive visit, when I blew up and lost it after she turned up unannounced at my front door, she leaves me alone. I think it shocked her. All my life I had been obedient and under her thumb, just like my father and there I was, suddenly morphed into an abusive little spitball. She has never been back and I let her rule me when I visit them. It keeps her happy.

9th August. Thursday.

All week I have been following the news. Monday night carried a few theories and a slightly clearer picture of Regina. The police have been clever and have pulled out the stops. Someone must have seen me get off the train at Tempe, although I didn't think I had been spotted,

because the recording of the Tempe station security camera has been checked and there is Regina, standing on the platform, looking for the exit. The two murders have been linked, as the authorities now know the same type of weapon was used in each. There is even a hint of a self defence motive because both victims were known to police but that is not something to be relied on.

How would they feel if they knew Regina was a guy?

I don't think that this investigation will cause me a problem. I have no connection with the victims and that always makes it hard for investigators. I watch a few of the crime shows on television and wonder how difficult it must be for someone to profile me. It will be easier I guess once the full range and extent of my Research becomes known.

Barbara now reads what I write and offers the odd comment here and there. I will probably ask her to proof read the whole thing at the end after I have gone over the publishable part of the story and put it together as a single document. That is when I will remove all of the pertinent parts that could identify us. Can't have them falling into the wrong hands. I am only writing those parts for a personal record of events as they pass. A sort of personal diary, so I don't forget some of the details of why and how to use as background when I do a couple of edits.

12th August. Sunday night.

Another week gone by and tonight I am exhausted. Far more so than after a hectic killing. We moved Barbara into the house over the weekend, making trip after trip back and forth with the ute to collect all of her things. We now have lots of furniture, some of it quite presentable, and the house is a little cluttered. Not all of her things have been put away or a place found for them yet.

We finished the last load about lunchtime today and spent the afternoon cleaning up her old apartment. It was shiny as a new pin when we finally left around five o'clock. Everything went smoothly and I am exceedingly glad that Barbara is quite strong for a woman; some of those lifts were heavy. The garage helped again. I found a two wheel sack trolley, standing tucked against the back wall beneath a tarpaulin. It came in useful for furniture shifting.

My muscles feel like jelly and we will have a soak in my large old fashioned tub shortly but for now, Barbara wants me to pack a pipe.

There was one jarring note during the shift. Something which took me completely by surprise. I look upon Barbara as a strong woman. Not muscularly but more in the vein of someone who can stand up for themselves. Her story revealed a lot though and I think today's little upset may be related to that.

We were coming down the stairs from her apartment when an older man entered the main entry. He was in his late forties, balding and running to fat but fairly tall and heavy. He had a puttyish sort of face, by that I mean he was not strong featured although his eyes gave him away.

I see a lot more now than I used to.

His casual glance as he passed me on the stair contained the elements of a predatory look which I can recognise instantly. I have learned to veil my own gaze

as I am a crocodile style of killer and use ambush attacks. It is no use advertising to a potential prey that you are strong and committed. That would be a warning and a chance for escape. When he was passing Barbara, I heard him whisper.

"Running away? Am I too much for you then?"

I turned but he had already passed Barbara and was around the bend in the stairwell, heading up. It was then I noticed Barbara's face. She had paled and there was a tinge of fear there. Barbara. Fear?

"What's going on?" I asked as we left the building.

She glanced across at me, colour returning to her cheeks as she replied.

"I'll tell you later. Leave it for now."

It's a good job she left it until later or I would probably have run up the stairs and made a huge mistake. Some predators rely on strength and he was one of them.

This is what Barbara related to me just a little while ago.

She moved into her apartment about a year ago and for the first couple of months it was fine but then Michael, call me Mick, moved in. At first she didn't take much notice of him apart from saying hello on the stairway when they happened to pass. Then she started to feel Mick's gaze lingering on her and once, when she turned as he went past, she found him staring at her. He wasn't embarrassed and gave her a wink. It was more than familiar. From then on, he stared at her more often, progressing to the odd leer. Then the small asides started, mostly carrying sexual innuendo. Barbara being Barbara called him on it one day and told him to back off. His reply was.

"What you going to do if I don't. Call the police? I'll just claim you made it up because you don't like me."

I could see the position Barbara was in. The police were not something she wanted in her life, especially as her bought identity had never been deeply checked. She was between a rock and a hard place. I knew his type. A bullying predator, used to getting his own way as people stepped back from his displays of strength. Potentially very dangerous to anyone in his immediate vicinity and with a preference for females. I reckon Mick watches porn and sees women as an outlet for sex, nothing more.

A nasty piece of work all told.

Enough for now, time for a smoke and a bath together.

17th August. Friday night.

A pretty uneventful week really. I haven't mentioned work for a while; it just goes on as usual. I think my fellow workers have twigged to Barbara and me being an item. It could be due to me spending nearly every lunchtime with her, sitting together with our thighs touching or it could be something in our manner. The women of course would have known about us long before the men, as there is an ability in women which allows them to perceive subtle behavioural changes that men miss. Some of the girls would have brought the men up to speed though.

There is also a slight power shift in the dynamics of female interaction. I can see these things much more clearly through my well trained crocodile eyes. I don't miss much these days.

Survival.

In the undercurrents, there is a slight deference shown to Barbara as a successful female and the teasing banter that used to be a part of my life has diminished to virtually zero. Maybe, in this case, it is nothing to do with me but rather a desire in the other females not to offend the unknown strength of Barbara.

Interesting, always something more to learn.

Chess of the emotions, taking place on a world scale although some of the ground rules would change, depending on the society in which they were applied. I find my mind is able to range far further now than it ever used to.

Speaking of Barbara and emotions, she has been rather quiet and subdued all week. I asked what was wrong but you know women, you have to ask a number of times before an answer is given. I have no idea why this is so, it makes life more complicated for males but there you go.

Eventually the truth of the matter came out and I listened as Barbara told me, through tears, which is very unusual for her, what was troubling her.

It was Mick. The bastard had got under her beautiful and decorated skin, twisting the hot knife into that area of her early upbringing where she thought she would never be vulnerable again. He reminded her of her stepfather and the fact he could so blatantly get away with it hurt her deeply.

She wished him dead.

By your command!

Watching over my shoulder as I type this, I heard her quick indrawn breath as the words appeared on the screen. Yes I mean it. I need number twelve, although I think that this will not be a solo job of Research. For the last, Barbara can be my Research assistant. I think I have done enough to prove I can get into a Serial Killer mentality and somewhere there has to be a reward for my diligence and her support.

We will erase Mick from his time line.

Later.

We talked about it. Mick's death that is. Barbara can be a nasty piece of work when she wants to be. I think the Christian thing is just a form of camouflage although she does live by some of the Christian ethics. I believe she justifies this one by saying that God will judge Mick's crimes. Of course you have to get him in front of his God to be judged. Problem is, this will have to be a joint venture as I don't know Mick from a bar of soap and getting near enough to him for an effective hit could be risky. I will have to invent a fiction for the Diary story, not really kosher but I think Regina will have to be resurrected for a cover. The narrative will be pretty close to the truth, only a few minor details will have to be changed to protect Barbara.

She must not appear in my book.

18th August. Saturday night.

Hell hath no fury.

Barbara's method for Mick's demise is as chilling as it is poetic. She wants him to come to death. That's what I typed, come to death. Not in a biblical sense. In case you haven't twigged, I mean death by ejaculation.

Don't snigger. It is not impossible, nor is it implausible. I remember hearing of something similar when I was a little tacker. Ever hear of an electroejaculator? They are used in farming reproductive episodes, usually on sheep but other species are also ejaculated by this method. Of course, to make someone a quid, their use has been converted to human requirements and these machines can be bought through various outlets. We will need to acquire a machine first. Sounds like sex shops and an outing for Regina. The other part of the plan involves Barbara hooking up with her drug connection and obtaining some GHB, or as it is also known GBH. For any tender hearted naive soul who has read this far, GHB is the date rape drug. Ah, I can feel the wheels turning. Barbara and I have some delicate planning to do.

18th August. Saturday.

On a whim, I took Regina out again last night but in a red wig I bought for a change of appearance. I went to a pub that I overheard someone at work mentioning and although they were there they didn't recognise me at all. Cool.

The evening was pleasant. I am learning to brush off males gently, usually by saying I am waiting for my boyfriend. I figure if I don't stay too long it will work. My hour or so was nearly up when this repulsive older man sidled up to me. He had been checking me out from across the bar for a while. He was tallish, well built but running to fat and balding. His face was non-descript but his eyes were chilling.

Predator eyes.

He made me think of grease and I tried to avoid him but he was persistent.

"I saw you from across the room. You're pretty stunning. Can I buy you a drink?"

"No thank you," I replied, "I already have one."

He checked out my nearly full glass and wandered off, returning a few minutes later with an identical one. My hackles rose in response.

Accepting a drink from a predator? No thank you very much. I had to get rid of him.

"What's your name?" he asked quietly. Just loud enough to be heard above the din.

"Regina." I answered. "What's yours?"

"Mick." He replied with a leer.

An idea was forming. Here was another predator, at work. It would be a great coup for me to take out another predator. Especially one as large and dangerous looking as Mick. I decided to set some bait in my trap.

"Well Mick, I am waiting for my boyfriend and he is bigger than you. However, you interest me." Believe it or not, in spite of the repulsion for him, I managed a shy smile before continuing. "Give me your phone

number and I will call you when I can get away from him. He thinks he owns me."

Mick's eyes lit up at the word 'own'. I guess he thought I was his sort of girl. If he only knew.

"Sure, look, I'll write it down for you. Make sure you ring. We could have some fun together."

I nodded dumbly, unwilling to open my mouth in case I spewed on him.

"Aren't you going to finish your drink?" he queried.

Taking his number from him and putting it in my purse I replied.

"No, I have to go to the ladies room right now. Will you excuse me?"

He nodded as I made a beeline for the ladies, checking over my shoulder to see if he was following. He wasn't so I went straight past the rest rooms and out of the back door. I didn't relax until I was safely in the car and driving away from the place.

But I have his telephone number safely in my bag. An entry point, a weakness in his *modus operandi*.

I would be my own bait.

Mick will be killed in the most horrible way I can think of for a sexual predator.

It involves an electroejaculator.

18th August. Still.

Barbara likes my fiction. She says it is quite believable and could be embellished to match what we intend to do. I agree with her but might make it more exciting. If I am going to write fiction rather than the truth, it has to be more real than real itself. After all, my other nine books were pure fiction and I had no trouble with them. Apart from getting them published.

All of my Research has been cathartic. My mind is clearer than it has ever been before and there is a centre of quietness to me now. Inner turmoil seems to have vanished. Is this what real serial killers find? An inner catharsis.

19th August. Sunday night.

Well, Regina has been to a couple of sex shops. Barbara and I prepared her today and Barbara drove her to the 'adult' shop. Shops rather, because the first two didn't carry the mains powered electroejaculator that we wanted. I checked them out on the net and found that the German versions were the most respected. Apparently they have the smoothest control over current and the best sized and length of probe. Now I will switch fonts because I need to keep the Diary going.

19th August. Sunday evening.

Regina went out today. Sex on a Sunday or rather sex shops on a Sunday. She wore some casual women's clothing but her makeup was impeccable. The shopping expedition was to purchase a good quality electroejaculator. German built is the best apparently.

Oh. I just realised that I didn't explain how these machines work. Easy. A slippery probe, which is attached to the machine by a lead, is slipped up the old back passage. Then the current is adjusted in two ways. One control sets the power level while the other is turned up and down to give first an increase then a decrease at that current level. The other switch is then advanced to increase the base level of current and the exercise is repeated. By the time your legs start quivering from the current level, ejaculation should have occurred.

It's all in how you twiddle the knobs.

Isn't it always?

Sorry about that, I couldn't resist the opportunity for a pun.

Suffice to say, I have returned home with a rather groovy machine. Still in its box where it will stay until needed. I am not that way inclined.

The next part of my plan involves procuring some GHB, the date rape drug, which I will slip into Mick's drink when I am in his apartment. Life should be easier after that. Of course he will be trying to drug me at the same time. My only advantage will be that he won't know that I am going to be drugging him while he is trying to drug me.

Where to obtain GHB is a little more difficult for me. Maybe Regina can help there also. I have to be careful not to rely on Regina too much. She is starting to seem more than a costume now.

How did you like that? Even tossed in some psychological fiction. Just to tart it up a bit. I'm getting there. Marrying the two is not simple.

22nd August. Wednesday.

Barbara took the ute for a run when we got home from work. She was gone a couple of hours and I was just starting to worry when she returned home with her prize. Five capsules of GHB which she assured me were probably quite pure. Her drug contact was straight up with her as she has known him for a while. Problem solved for us but Regina has to score somewhere.

Think dammit.

25th August. Saturday.

Regina got lucky last night. No, not that way. Remember, I am Regina. It's me in a dress, okay. What I should have said is, Regina scored some GHB. Yes I was lucky. No, this isn't a convenient fiction.

It's like this.

I went to another pub with live entertainment. There always seems to be something interesting going on when a decent band is playing. I stood amongst the crowd watching, copping the odd pat on the bum but I was getting used to that. Women have a lot to put up with really. Anyway, I am digressing. What I was doing was observing and for some reason my

attention zoned in on a guy at the bar who had arrived about twenty minutes earlier.

He was rough hewn and tattooed and seemed to be personable, chatting to a girl sitting on a bar stool to his left. When she turned her attention away for a moment, I saw him look around and quick as a flash, drop something into her drink.

A spiker! This could be my only chance.

The bar stool to his right was unoccupied, so I wandered over and sat on it. He didn't notice me as his attention was on the girl to his left as she sipped her drink. I put my left hand on his thigh and squeezed lightly. He whipped around in surprise and his face relaxed a little as he took in Regina. Regina is quite natural now as I have mastered the feminine approach. I looked at him through eyelashes heavy with mascara and tutted.

"Naughty, naughty."

"What are you talking about?" He looked around with a worried face.

"Nothing. I don't care what you are up to. It's no concern of mine but I desperately need to score some GHB. I'll pay triple what its worth, in cash."

I fed him my sweetest smile and lowered my lashes as I squeezed his leg. A shifty look crossed his face and I felt the tingling of danger. I was on really shaky ground here.

"Don't know what you're talking about," he hissed.

"I was across the room and saw the move," I replied. "All I want to do is score then I will leave you to your drink. If I was a cop I could bust you right now but I'm not."

He glanced around the crowded bar, taking in the rowdy patrons.

"Not here. Out the back."

"No way big guy. Here is fine. Tell me how much and I'll wrap it in a piece of paper which I will pretend to write my phone number on before I pass it to you."

Once more the wheels went round. He wasn't happy about it but five minutes later I was walking out of there with five capsules and one hundred and fifty dollars less in my purse.

Yeah, I got ripped off but who cares. I had my GHB.

Now it was time for some GBH.

How was that for fiction? Barbara has her thumbs up and a smile on her face. The fiction is meshing nicely with reality and we should be able to pull this off without implicating her. Our plan was for Barbara to go and see Mick with a few beers and suggest a truce but I don't want to risk her so I will go and knock on his door as Regina and pretend to be looking for Barbara, an old friend. Barbara kept her spare key to get into the building so I will say that Barbara gave me a key to use

when I was in town. I'll tell him I am, or rather Regina is, a female entertainer. If I am not inside that apartment within two minutes I'll leave.

Bet I will be.

Problem is, who will be the first to down the spiked drink. I'll have to mention I have a serious hangover. That way I can sip my drink slowly, or pretend to. He shouldn't suspect anything, least of all being double crossed.

Midweek would be the best time as he is more liable to be at home then.

Chapter 17.

26th August. Sunday.

I rang Mick today and spoke with my best Regina voice, apologising for leaving the bar but explaining that my boyfriend had just come in the back door when I got to the ladies and he had dragged me out of the pub. I talked like a victim. Some men prey on victims. I know. I have, but not in that way. My predation was more a fulfilment of reality than a sexual thing.

Deal is, he agreed for me to come around Wednesday night.

Great.

Things are really falling into place on this piece of Research.

Wednesday it will be. Predator versus predator and may the best man, giggle, win.

I am a pretty good fiction writer, even if I do say so myself. Fortunately Barbara agrees with me so I am not delusional. If she thought it was crap she would say so. As in the fiction, we have decided that Wednesday night would be a good night to implement our plan. I am comfortable as Regina and believe we can pull this off. It's for a good cause, Barbara's peace of mind with a little soupcon of revenge as a garnish.

29th August. Wednesday night, late.

December.

Oh joy, oh bliss. I have finished my Research.

Satisfaction with a capital S.

Yes I will relate what happened. You could gather from the fact I am typing that I survived but I did better than that. I have killed another predator. Not to feed but as a contest, which I won hands down. Now I've given it all away and there will be no suspense.

I drove to the address that Mick gave me, leaving my car on the street with the innocent looking box containing the electroejaculator on the front seat. As Regina, I nervously walked the path to the front door before pressing the button under his name. Mick answered and buzzed me in. When I reached his apartment the door swung wide and I noticed the tiny camera over the door. I am sensitive to these things now.

He invited me in and as I walked past him, he tried to give me a peck on the cheek. I stepped back, shaking my head.

"What sort of girl do you think I am, I hardly know you?" I admonished.

He smiled an evil little smile.

"Sorry, I thought you were here for a reason."

"I am. You seemed like a nice man." I lied through the back of my teeth.

Mick ushered me into his lounge room which seemed pretty clean for a single guy and contained a large, flat screen television. I pretended to be enthused about it. He offered me a drink. I asked for a glass of red wine and he went off to the kitchen to get it.

Just what I needed. I quickly sat on the lounge in reach of his beer, a can in a stubby holder, and took two capsules of GHB out of my bag. He had been watching something on his big screen before I arrived, I was certain of that. I heard movement in the kitchen and the sound of a cork being pulled. Mick wasn't a cheapskate then, no Chateau de Carton for me. I hefted the beer can, about half full, and hurriedly opened up one capsule after the other, tipping the contents into his beer. I had just enough time to put the empty pieces of the capsules back into my bag and swirl the can around before I heard him coming back into the room. I had chosen to wear a pants suit so had no difficulty with sitting back and demurely crossing my legs.

Mick handed my wine to me and then sat right beside me so our hips were touching.

"Boney little thing aren't you?" he commented as our hips met.

"I work out a lot," I lied. "It looks better when I dance.

He licked his lips before replying.

"What sort of dancing do you do?"

"Pole dancing mostly. In clubs. You know the sort of thing I mean?"

"Oh yes," he replied lifting his can of beer, an evil leer on his face. "I do. Drink up."

He took a good swallow of his beer while I only took a tiny sip of the wine. It tasted fine and I was wondering whether he had laced it or not. My curiosity was confirmed when he pressed me to drink more.

"I had too much to drink last night and I have a bit of a headache. If you don't mind, I will just ease into it," was my reply.

It was the best excuse I could think of at the time. He took another swallow of his beer as an example and turned to me.

"Do you ever watch porn?"

"Sorry?"

"Do you ever watch porn? You know, sex on DVD's."

I carefully considered my reply. I wanted him relaxed and unexpectant as far as feeling threatened and he seemed to expect something here. I tested the water.

"Not often. Why, do you have some?" All innocence.

"As a matter of fact I do." He reached for the remote and pointed it at the DVD player. The giant screen lit up and there, larger than life, was a guy and a couple of girls going at it hammer and tongs. I don't have to detail what was on the screen, you get the drift.

I lifted my glass and pretended to take a sip which triggered him to gulp down the rest of his beer. He rose from the couch.

"Just going for another beer. Back in a mo."

Off he went, leaving me alone with the anatomically bizarre action on the plasma screen. I looked over my shoulder and as soon as he had disappeared into the kitchen I tipped a third of my drink into a withered pot plant. Probably its first drink in a long while. I sat back down and tried to work out which body part belonged to which body as the fake gasping and moaning increased.

Mick came back into the room, carrying a fresh beer, ever so slightly unsteady on his feet. He didn't seem to notice as he sat down.

"Oh good, you've drunk some of your wine. How you feelin' darlin'?"

His voice was slightly slurred and I knew the GHB must be starting to affect him but how much longer would I have to wait.

"This bits good, see how he, he, he..... I don' fee' ree' goo'."

He slowly turned his face toward me as he slid sideways, spilling his beer. I didn't care, it wasn't my place. Mick struggled against the drug for a little while but the double dose of GHB seemed to have done the trick.

I went on a hunt and found a couple of extension leads which are ideal for tying someone up. I did as he watched through his piggy eyes, immobile and unable to resist. I left him on the couch while I went downstairs for my box of exotic tricks. I jammed the front door to stop it from shutting and in a moment was back in his flat with the box. Luck was with me and I saw no one.

The porn was still playing on the big screen as I set the container down on his coffee table.

"I've got a real treat for you Mick. I bet you've been drugging unsuspecting women and having sex with them for quite a while. Well now the tables have turned."

I moved into his line of sight.

"First." I removed my wig and was gratified to see his eyeballs bulge at the sight of a man rather than the woman Regina standing before him.

"Next. I picked up this little machine. Just for you. You may or may not know what it is but I guarantee it will get you off."

I unpacked the clean and shiny machine in front of him. It didn't register. At least his eyes didn't boggle. I took a pair of latex gloves out of my bag and after donning them, went over to Mick. I untied him and wiped down the cords with a damp rag from the kitchen. No point in leaving fingerprints. Then I undid his belt. He must have thought I was going to cut him because he managed a few weak movements. Didn't bother me. I pulled his pants down, along with his underpants before trussing him up again. Just like a Christmas turkey this time.

In exactly the same position as one.

Only I gagged him as well. No point in waking the neighbours if he managed a scream during procedures.

There was no way he was going to get out of this alive. I left him on the couch with his bum in the air and went and looked in the box for some form of lubricant. I figured there must be a small container of it in there. Sort of a starter to get the ball rolling. If you get my drift. There it was, a small tube in a plastic bag with the instructions. Great, it made for easier insertion of the probe and was a good electrical conductor and that's what was required.

Those Germans think of everything.

I set the machine up as per instructions and plugged it into a wall socket before turning it on. There is an opportunity for another joke or two but I'll leave it for now. The machine was emitting a low hum, even with both dials set on zero. Time for insertion.

Picking up the shiny penile probe on its lead, I squeezed the jelly all over it and spread it with my gloved hand. It was far more than Mick deserved but hey, let's not be petty. It took a bit to shove it up his bum hole but once it had started to go, it wasn't long before the thing disappeared inside as per the instructions.

I went back to the box and wound the current level all the way up to maximum then I looked up at Mick with my hand on the other control.

"Ready Mick? This is where you get yours."

With that I started to wind the dial all the way over to maximum. He started bucking and jerking and trying to scream when it was only half way around. I left it there for a moment.

"Bearable is it Mick? Well try this you bastard."

I wound the control to full which caused major contractions of the muscles of his rump and upper legs. It must have been painful. He groaned, off in another reality, hooked up to an electroejaculator in front of his porn show.

There is justice after all.

I didn't stay to watch, merely dragging the couch around enough so he could see the screen. Somehow I didn't think he would be that interested.

I did my usual clean up. Vacuuming, wiping, and washing the glass. All the stuff I routinely do if I have to be in someone's home for Research. I also wiped down the box the electroejaculator came in, mostly to remove fingerprints, and stashed it in Mick's bedroom cupboard. Then I went to my bag and took out my camera. Click, click, click and click.

That was it. I said goodbye to Mick, replaced my wig and picking up my black plastic rubbish bag of potential evidence, headed for the door.

After checking the way was clear, I left.

Simple.

That's not quite how it went but I am not going to write this all down again. In actuality I surprised Mick by turning up out of the blue, dressed as Regina, supposedly looking for Barbara. He was smitten with my sultry looks and

couldn't get me inside fast enough. I thought he was going to jump me right there and nervously fingered the hidden craft knife in my pocket, my back up, before he offered me a drink. It mostly went as I have written until it was time to get the electroejaculator. I flicked the lights on and off a couple of times, our prearranged signal, and Barbara brought that up.

She entered the apartment carrying the shiny box and looked at a trussed up Mick with satisfaction before going to stand in front of him.

"Know what this is asshole? You are about to get yours."

Mick's eyes widened with recognition although the gag kept him silent. Barbara surprised me then by placing the box on the coffee table and delivering a powerful kick to Mick's ribs. I heard a crack. Poor Mick.

I have mentioned that Barbara has done martial arts haven't I?

All that was necessary was to set the machine up. There was a tube of lubricant jelly provided, as well as an instruction manual in several languages.

I was useless for inserting the probe. OCD is a strange condition and one of my things was a dislike of touching or contacting any parts of a stranger's body that carries germs. This included hands in most cases. Even wearing gloves and overboots as we were didn't seem to help a lot. Obsession is obsession. I don't mind mine.

I became the audience, as ex nurse Barbara set to and did all the necessary lubricating and inserting while keeping up a running commentary to Mick.

"You know Mick, it's bastards like you who make this world difficult for us girls. If we say no, we mean it and having a shit like you, prowling around and making our lives uncomfortable, is no joke. As for the date rapes using GHB, well mate, the tables have turned and I am going to do to you what you have been doing to others for ages. You are going to have sex against your will. Until you die. I will be doing the world a favour at no charge."

Not quite true. At this juncture Mick was ready for a little charge. So he received one. Then another more serious one. By the time his muscles were spasming; Mick was jerking and groaning in a manner which suggested he was getting off but not pleasantly. His cracked rib didn't seem to interfere with the process of electroejaculation, although each jerk must have caused him pain.

Good.

We cleaned up the place and left him to it. Seemingly two happy girls leaving his apartment. Barbara took one last look at Mick, trussed up and jerking on his lounge, before she pulled the door too. He looked like one of those toy dogs that used to be popular with children, the cord running from his backside to the powerbox on the coffee table.

We closed the door.

31st August. Friday night.

Not much to report. The slasher murders, as they have been dubbed by the press, have disappeared off the radar. There was an inkling of a step forward when one expert postulated a transvestite but the theme was not generally taken up. I am not a transvestite but I do make quite a passable

girl when I wish. I don't think Mick has been found yet. Better happen soon or his powerbill will be enormous.

It may be necessary to tip off the police.

I am happy that my Research has finally finished and I can get down to properly writing the 'Diary of a Serial Killer.' It will be my best book to date and will cause a bit of an uproar. Inside information on a Baker's Dozen of murders.

True fiction.

To be honest, I find that my Research has changed me. I started down this road in an attempt to write a book with an entirely original content. I wanted it to be so realistic that I picked a subject matter as yet untouched and carried out the Research to enable me to write it. I chose a Diary format and wrote the book in the first person so it would seem less like fiction, which it isn't.

I am proud of my work.

However, as my Research continued, I found that the regime freed me from some of the misconceptions and programming of my earlier existence. It became, in a way, therapy. Now my view of the world has changed and I must apologise to some of those poor unfortunates who were the subject of my Research.

Although an apology will not bring them back, their deaths may help others to see that who and what they are is a product of many factors and the world out there contains many victims of a somewhat heartless society. This I realise is a simplistic and bleak view of life but as I think back over some of my Research subjects, I begin to wonder about their lives.

Mrs Franciscus: Why was she on her own? Why was there so little contact with the world outside that delivery of a book could give her so much pleasure? Will I end up like that one day?

Rosaline: What was the reason for her embitterment and the satisfaction she exhibited in her ability to put down a 'weak' male? What factors in her life, up to the time I met her, caused her to be so hard and embittered?

The 'working' girl: Why would someone end up in a position of selling sexual favours for money? Was she controlled by a pimp or did she just gravitate toward the profession? Did she have people in her life that cared for her or was her landscape bleak and empty?

Shirley's boyfriend Russel: Was he seduced by the idea of someone loving him or was Shirley another possession to be looked after in case he lost her? Did he really love her?

The three followers of the Church of the Hanging Christ: I feel a little bad about these three, particularly Penny. What drives people to be so staunch about religion and the belief in an all powerful God? Their God did not lift a finger to help them and somewhere, another of the ilk will be quoting all the excuses why he should not have. What is the point of inviting God into your life if he doesn't do anything? They invited me into their life and I made them famous. Posthumously, unfortunately.

The victim: Almost an archetype. Is being a victim an excuse not to take charge of your life? Does it excuse all decisions made so there is no responsibility for any action or is it an attempt to grab sympathy or money? I cannot answer these questions. I fulfilled the victim's wishes and enshrined her forever in history as a victim. She became what she portrayed.

The Bishop: Really, the God thing again. If I was all powerful, I wouldn't allow one of my higher-ups to be taken out by someone doing Research who felt in need of a challenge. Did I prove or disprove the existence of a God?

If the Bishop was due to die because his God thought it was time, I was merely serving destiny. If I took him early, his God could not protect him.

The priest: A little messy. I always tried to not have my Research subjects suffer too much pain or a lingering death but the priest's death was unfortunate. Maybe his God tried to save him; or maybe his God wanted him to suffer. Did the priest have a dark side as some of them do? What drives a person to give up a normal life to live a life of celibacy in the service of his God?

Troy: One of the many males I have encountered recently who think that women are solely for their pleasure. To learn social skills and woo a female is much too hard. It is easier to push and take. It never ceases to amaze me that some women respond to this sort of advance. Is there desperation out there or do some people just not care anymore? I performed a social service by deleting Troy but wonder if he had a mother and father who miss him. Could anyone miss a person like Troy?

The would-be rapist: I have no time for those who prey at such levels. As a predator myself, I look on these types as the scavengers, the hyenas and the vultures of the predatory world hanging around for carrion. Occasionally, due to hunger, they are driven to kill but there is no finesse. I did femalekind a great service in deleting this example. But what drove

him to be a scavenger? What traumatic events could take a human being and turn them into a hyena, preying at the fringe of society? Was he laughed at in school? Did he have a small penis and have to endure the put downs of less than loving women? When is love functional and when is it harmful?

Mick: Another predator but far better organised and further up the chain. Sneaky and feelingless, he plied his female victims with drugs to enable his desires to be met. Was a drug affected victim a requirement or the only way he could get what he wanted? Why did a healthy male end up like that? What had bent his past?

Unfortunately, most of the questions raised will go unanswered but what I find personally interesting, is that I am now asking them. I have stopped being so reactive to my environment and can see the ebb and flow of cause and effect underlying all of humanity. There are reasons that things are as they are.

Shit doesn't just happen, arseholes cause it.

Barbara read this bit and just shook her head. She thinks it is too much to put in the Diary although she understands my need to write down as much as possible regarding the results of my Research. Even if some of it is personal. I am happy that I no longer have to kill. Killing has lost its lustre. I have proved that I can do what I have set out to do and the Diary is nearly finished now but I feel there is more to life than a morbid fascination in being published. I no longer need the therapy of writing, as my reasons for self-inflicted wounding have become clear to me. No one bothered to listen when I cried for help; they were too busy telling me what to do. The cutting was a release for the frustration I felt in trying to convey my pain at the death of Aunt Mary when no one could know of our relationship.

There was no one I could talk to then.

Chapter 18.

2nd September. Sunday night.

Finally. Mick has been found with no need for a tip off to the police. Being a bizarre form of death, his demise has grabbed the odd headline in some areas of the press and conjecture is running rife. It is closure for me.

I now feel able to wrap up this Diary and get the manuscript together for presentation to a publisher. Anonymously of course. I have no wish to be incarcerated for legitimate Research. Of course, there are elements in society who cannot comprehend the greater good that a glimpse into the inner workings of a serial killer's mind can bring. These elements would make my life totally miserable if I was ever found out. It is time to go through my computer and extract the passages for the Diary before my 'disappearance'.

I am finding it difficult to think of a finish to the Diary and have no wish to dribble on forever. Most of what I have wanted to say has been said and I think it is time for me to go.

Adieu.

Well, that's it. I must admit to feeling a little sad about finishing my little journey to unexplored areas. A bit like an adventurer returning home after glorious discoveries to be once more embroiled in the tedium of daily existence. How does one come down from the top of Everest to once again pick up the reins of a normal life? Can life ever be normal again? Hey, this isn't half bad. I might even add this bit into the Diary.

Barbara and I have made a decision. We want to get married but before that happens, we intend to transform.

What do I mean by transform?

There is always a risk of discovery in a venture like this so we are going to obtain new identities. The options are to find a couple very similar to us in appearance, win their trust and then assume their identities after turning them into fish bait. It is not really Research though and I am finding the whole idea a little difficult to rationalise. Barbara came up with the idea and it has merit but she too is a little against taking human life merely to make ours easier. It will be a method of last resort, although I have already thought of a painless method of death for them. Our other option is to try and trace the source of Barbara's previous change of identity and purchase a clean, new identity each. Maybe pay a premium for a good quality life.

A life with a bank accounting history and documents illustrating years of existence.

A real life.

One which will allow us to get married legally under our new names. Do we get to choose our names or did they belong to dead people? We wouldn't really know of course.

To this end, we have decided to sell the house. Barbara already has substantial savings due to the sale of half the house in Tamworth to her stepfather before he died, then the full sale of the house afterwards. She has never been a spendthrift so has quite a bit of capital behind her.

I have always saved what I could and because I lead a relatively simple existence, my bank account is acceptable. Selling the house will be a big step for me but we will need the money for some plastic surgery. This will have to occur after we leave work so our change of appearance will not be noticed. Even with the expense of disappearing, we should still have a sizeable nest egg to assist us in our new lives.

Dear old mother will just have to suffer me disappearing. No doubt she will file a missing persons report when she can't contact me but that is just how things will have to be. I certainly won't miss her.

Dad on the other hand will probably be happy for me. Escape from my mother has probably occupied his thinking for a long time but he knew that she would just hunt him down and make his life twice as miserable if he tried. He really is a dead man walking.

Something I intend in my own fashion.

I will be sorry to leave this house with the wormhole garage but the thought of life with Barbara, or whoever she is next, is so exciting that I would give up far more to just be with her.

I must keep this journal updated as our new lives take shape.

More later.

7th September. Friday night.

Tomorrow we have a real garage sale. Anything remotely connected to my Research has been removed and we intend to empty it as a precursor to selling the house. I have already been to see a couple of agents and they have shown interest in handling the house sale. The price they mentioned as a guide is over five times what I paid for it and I feel that Barbara and I may have to do a lot of work on the presentation side before it is sold.

I haven't really had the time or inclination to work on the 'Diary of a Serial Killer'. I believe the completion of the Research was more important to me than the book itself but the public has a right to know the results. It would be a bit pointless otherwise. Yes, I would also like to see one of my books in print.

8th September. Sunday.

The garage sale was a huge success. People started arriving as Barbara and I were hauling stuff out of the garage early in the morning. It was as though the item we had just carried out was exactly what that buyer was looking for. Some of the people gave us a lift with a particularly heavy object only to find their hearts desire tucked in behind where it was. We made up prices as we went and although a lot of bargaining went on, most purchasers went away happy.

We sold everything and now have an empty garage. It is an eerie feeling standing in a space which was once a wormhole for everything I needed. There was a lot of coincidence in the things that turned up in the garage.

Blame the aliens.

16th September. Sunday again.

Busy, busy, busy. The house is painted and clean, the gardens are trimmed and we had another garage sale this weekend to sell most of our excess furniture. The 'For Sale' sign out front is large and bright and we have had a look at a couple of rentals to live in after the sale of the house. We are still at work but after the house is sold we will resign. The reason will be for an extended honeymoon or working holiday in Europe.

Now there's a thought.

Barbara is grinning as she reads this.

Europe could be an ideal solution for us.

29th September. Saturday night.

There has been a lot of interest in the house and a contract has been signed. The price was what the agent advertised it at. We are just waiting for the cooling off period to end. We have a unit now and will start moving our things over shortly. I realise there has not been a lot for Tania Torqs to do lately but our lives have been so busy. I cannot donate a lot of time to Tania anymore, as that time rightly belongs to my living and breathing companion, Barbara. The weather is warming up and summer is on the way, we may even buy a camper van and live on the road for a while.

I think the new us would enjoy that.

14th October. Sunday.

The sale of the house is finalised and we are in our new unit. We have also handed in our notice at work. This coming week will be the last of our employment. Barbara has already managed to make contact with the identity provider and we have negotiated a price for two full identities. Next will be the minor plastic surgery to change our looks a little. It will be fun but I hope I will like Barbara's new face as much as I loved the old one. After my Research however, I have come to the realisation that beauty is really what is on the inside, although a pleasant exterior does help.

Hey, let's be realistic here!

17th November. Saturday.

It is nearly a month since I talked to Tania Torqs. I finished the 'Diary of a Serial Killer' editing and will shortly put it all together as the finished product. For the last couple of weeks we have stayed inside eating up our store of food, as walking around with bandaged faces would really draw attention to us. Between us we look like the Invisible Man meets The Mummy. Yes, we had our plastic surgery. Barbara, sorry, Mia, wanted to surprise me with her new face, finished and without bruising which is why she remains bandaged for so long. I thought that was a sweet idea so I have done the same. I can't wait until Monday when the bandages come off.

19th November. Monday night.

We keep stealing glances at each other. We can't help it. Mia is beautiful in a refined way. She now has a cupid's bow in her pouty lips which makes her so cute. Her eyes are just ever so slightly oriental and her nose has been straightened which makes her appear so totally different. My face is less boyish than it was and I can no longer be Regina, as there is a masculine cast to my features now. Barbara approves and as I write this she is in the bath waiting for me to join her. All we have to do now is have our counterfeiter photograph us and remake our driving licences with the change of face. After that we will be free. Got to go, I hear Mia calling me.
More later.

Literary Agents note: This is the end of the manuscript as we received it.